BING

WINTER 2006

No. 144

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

Founded in 1936, the world's longest-running fan club - as recognised by the Guinness Book of World Records

Web sites:

Club:	www.club-crosby.org
BING magazine:	http.//members.aol.com/macwilmslo/BING_magazine.html
Bing Crosby Internet Museum:	www.mcckc.edu/~crosby/

Honorary President: KATHRYN CROSBY

Honorary Members: Harry Crosby - Mary Crosby Brodka - Nathaniel Crosby - Phillip Crosby Jr. Ken Barnes - Pat Boone - Rory Burke - Michael Feinstein - Rich Little - Gia Prima - Andy Williams

Special Distribution: Gonzaga University - Hofstra University - Library of Congress - Tacoma Public Library - Spokane Public Library

Magazine Editor
MALCOLM MACFARLANE
3 Osborne Close
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 2EE, UK
Tel: 01625 528942
e-mail: Macwilmslo@aol.com

Secretary and Treasurer
MICHAEL CRAMPTON
19 Carrholm Crescent
Chapel Allerton
Leeds LS7 2NL , UK
Tel/Fax: 0113 2689556
e-mail: michael@club-crosby.org

American Co-Editor
GREG VAN BEEK
3006 Emerald Street,
West Bend
Wisconsin 53095, USA
Tel: (262) 338-8986
e-mail: tvanbeek@execpc.com

American / Canadian Representative
F.B. (Wig) WIGGINS
5608 North 34th Street
Arlington
Virginia 22207, USA
Tel/Fax: (703) 241-5608
e-mail: wigbing@hotmail.com

Australian / New Zealand Representative
DAVID CURRINGTON
34A Geoffrey Street,
Turramurra, New South Wales
Australia 2074
Tel: (02) 9440 2434

CONTRIBUTORS

American Contributors: Bob Achorn / Peter Cakanic / Arne Fogel / Wayne Martin / Martin McQuade / Jon Oye / Carolyn Schneider

British Contributors: Bert Bishop / Ron Bosley / Ken Crossland / Keith Parkinson / John Walton

Canadian Contributor: Gord Atkinson

Membership renewals fall due on 1st. January each year and subscription rates effective for 2007 are:

USA and Canada	US $20 per annum
UK	£12 per annum
Mainland Europe, including Eire	£13 per annum
Australia and New Zealand	A$40 per annum
South America / South Africa / Singapore / Japan	£15 per annum

All remittances should be sent to Michael Crampton in **£ sterling** payable to *The International Club Crosby* with the exception of:
(a) American and Canadian members who should send their remittances in U.S. dollars to F. B. Wiggins
(b) Australian and New Zealand members who should pay David Currington in Australian dollars

Articles for inclusion in the magazine should be sent to the Magazine Editor or the American Co-Editor.

Other Correspondence concerning membership, non-arrival of the magazine or other aspects of the club's affairs should either be sent to the Secretary/Treasurer or to your local representative please.

BING is the official journal of *The International Club Crosby* and is published in the spring, summer and winter of each year. Opinions expressed in articles are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the ICC.

All original material © Copyright ICC 2006.

EDITORIAL

As 2006 comes to an end, we can look back and say that our 70th anniversary year was indeed a good year, replete with many important happenings. In this last quarter of 2006, we're reminded of another anniversary. It was just 80 years ago, on October 18, 1926, that a young 23 year-old Bing Crosby recorded his first song – and first duet, "I've Got The Girl". Looking forward to 2007, we have yet another anniversary to observe, although this one is far less festive than the previous two. October 14, 2007 marks the 30th anniversary of Bing's passing, as incredible as it may seem.

Moving on to more pleasant matters, this past August, your American Co-Editor had the privilege of having some brief contact with singer Steve Lawrence, of "Steve & Eydie" fame. A letter from Steve brought forth some nice comments about our man; "When we worked with Bing Crosby (on the Bell Telephone Jubilee in 1976- GVB) it was a great thrill for us. We were big fans and he was very generous with his comments to us. As he had been following our careers and liked our work very much."

Several important happenings will have taken place by the time you read this. The first is our Honorary President's return engagement at Hofstra University in Hempstead, NY on October 15th. *MY LIFE WITH BING - Kathryn Crosby remembering Bing through song, images and film*, should be a sell out. Hofstra, as you may recall, was the site of the three-day conference on Bing Crosby and American Culture in November 2002. Jane Stoutenborough has a report.

There are also two very special DVD releases from Universal Studios Home Video that will be essentials for your DVD library. On October 10th, Universal released a special edition of *Holiday Inn*, produced by our own Ken Barnes. This is the 60th anniversary edition Ken produced back in 2002 that was only released in Region 2 format for the UK. Now, it's making its debut in Region 1 format for US machines, and those of us in North America will at last be able to see all of the wonderful bonus features Ken has assembled, including an in-depth interview with Fred Astaire's daughter Ava.

Then a month later, on November 14th, Universal released the "Bing Crosby Screen Legend Collection" of five of his feature films, ranging from 1937-44. These include *Waikiki Wedding, Double or Nothing, East Side of Heaven, If I Had My Way* and *Here Come the Waves*. The good news is, all of these films are making their DVD debut, and three of them are being released commercially for the very first time! Ken Crossland provides full details in *Keeping Track*.

So it looks like we're ending 2006 on a good note! Let's hope for more from Universal in 2007.

Greg Van Beek

And more good news with the Clemmer Theatre in Spokane being renamed as The Bing Crosby Theatre and another *Bing Crosby Restaurant* opening in the Palm Springs area. Together with the Del Mar race track, The Pebble Beach Golf Tournament and the Bing Crosby Stadium, these attractions all unite to keep Bing's name alive. But of course it's Christmas which really brings Bing's name to the fore again. I suppose that many of us almost resent the over-emphasis on Bing's holiday songs as it tends to obscure his magnificent body of work in so many other areas but so be it. We must count our blessings, especially with Bing's recording of 'White Christmas' now officially recognised again as the biggest selling single of all time.

Amongst the many varied articles in this issue, there are reports on Kathryn Crosby's continued promotion of her life with Bing and this is certainly having a very positive impact. With Carolyn Schneider also making book tours, Bing's family are really helping the cause. You will see a report on the annual Leeds meeting later in this edition which Carolyn attended and this has led her to try to organise a Crosby gathering in the USA for next year. She has it in mind to put on an event in Las Vegas which other Crosby family members would attend and hopefully some local celebrities might be able to support if they are available at that time. Will any of you who would be interesting in attending such a gathering, please let Carolyn know of your interest by contacting her at White Feather Publishing Company, 9811 W. Charleston Blvd. # 2-185, Las Vegas, Nevada 89117 – phone (702) 240-2479 – email: artist71635@msn.com .

As always, I have had an embarrassment of riches from which to compile this issue and my apologies to those contributors whose work has been held back until next time. What a nice problem to have nearly 30 years after Bing's passing.

My thanks to Jon Oye for the front cover. Jon took a black and white photo of Bing and using special software managed to convert it into the attractive colour picture you now see. Thank you to Arthur Blood for the montage used as our back cover.

Happy Holiday!

Malcolm Macfarlane

CONTENTS

	Page Nos
Editorial	3
Secretary / Treasurer's Report	4
Russ Rullman	5
Move Over Harry Lillis–Here I Come	6
Bing Crosby Stadium Rebuilt	6
Met Theater renamed to honor Bing Crosby	6
Bing's back in town	7
It's A 'White Christmas' all over the place.	7
Spotlight on Bing Crosby	8
The Top 100 Pop Artists 1890-2002	8
'White Christmas' is top again	8
Merry Christmas, From Bing	9
Riding a Star and Riding it High	11
She Came, She Sang, She Conquered	15
Trading Post	16
Books 'n' Bing	17
The Hidden Art of Bing Crosby	20
Uncle Everett	22
Bing and Me: Crooner's niece makes Elko visit.	24
Celluloid Crosby	25
The A-Z Of Bing's Movies	27
Bing In Germany.	29
Bing's British Hits 1945-48	31
One Sweet Letter From You	39
Bing's Radio Ratings	40
Bing On The Box	46
The Road To Leeds 2006	50
Once in a While	53
Gord Atkinson's 'The Crosby Years'	55
Keeping Track	57

SECRETARY / TREASURER'S REPORT

Leeds 2006 was another warm, friendly and engaging day and despite technical difficulties and the absence of our editor Malcolm and filmmaker extraordinaire Ken Crossland, we succeeded in negotiating an entertaining programme. Here, I would like to thank Ken and Malcolm, in retrospect, for their DVD contributions and Carolyn Schneider, George O'Reilly, Arnold Pope and John Walton for their support and help. Jane Fitzgerald has the full details on a subsequent page.

2007 will be a financially challenging year for the ICC as postal costs rise across the world and I would like to appeal to members to support the club by renewing their subscriptions promptly. Members can also help by purchasing the ICC calendar and by buying copies of back issues of the magazine. In the last issue of BING, I asked members for ideas on how we could raise funds to help keep the subscription from having to be raised. One response was to suggest a raffle of Crosbyana and I would welcome views on this.

We would like to congratulate **Etty Gits** of The Netherlands, our former European correspondent and magazine distributor, on the occasion of her marriage to Frank Van Der Sanden on the 20th September this year. We wish them every happiness for the future.

NEW MEMBERS

Bing Crosby's work continues to hold interest and appeal to people from all walks of life and we are delighted when that interest attracts them to becoming members of the International Club Crosby. It is an honour to welcome: -

MONACO

HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco

UNITED STATES

Peggy Doyle (Oak Lawn, Illinois), John Droese (Milwaukee, Wisconsin), Art Evans (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), Katie Filler (Red Lion, Pennsylvania), Joseph Klein (New York, New York), Glenn Mueller (Rowland Heights, California), Dave Richards (Hot Springs, Arkansas), Greg Russo (Cincinnati, Ohio), Dick Ryan (Broomfield, Colorado), William Torpey (Rockville Centre, New York), John Vickers (Highlands Ranch, Colorado), George Wall (Phoenix, Arizona), Albin Yadusky (New York, New York).

ENGLAND

Prof. Frank Morgan (Bath, Avon), Malcolm Coppox (Salford, Lancashire)

IRELAND

Eddie McGinley (Dublin 15)

DONATIONS

SPECIAL CONTRIBUTION TO ICC

Fellow ICC member **Ernest Sutkowski** of New Jersey has been a leading supporter of Bing on both sides of the Atlantic for many years. Among other activities, he has sponsored Crosby radio programmes in the United States and presented many commercially-released compact discs to various radio presenters in the U.S. and the U.K. for their use on the air. He has also been a major supporter of the special Crosby CD series being produced by Jonzo Records.

In the summer issue of BING (#143), we announced the recent death of Francis X. Smith, a long-time friend of Ernest Sutkowski and a staunch Crosby fan throughout his lifetime. Ernest has made a substantial donation to our club in memory of Francis X. Smith, which we would like to acknowledge and extend to Ernest our grateful thanks for his continuing interest in Bing and generosity to ICC.

Elizabeth Gregory of South Croydon in Surrey also made a very generous donation and we thank Elizabeth for her support. Further donations will be acknowledged in the spring 2007 issue of BING.

DEATHS

With sadness I draw members' attention to the passing of the following:
Charles Bannister, (Essex, UK), Ron Daniels (Victor Harbor, South Australia), William Brooks (Highland, New York), John Hartmann (Staten Island, New York), Richard LeFevre (Vermont), Tony Toran (Lauderhill, Florida), Russ Rullman (California).

Norman Wolfe had already commented on Tony Toran's death when he reviewed Tony's new book about Russ Columbo in our last issue and we have separate pieces about Richard LeFevre and Russ Rullman on the following pages.

Charles Bannister was 81 when he passed away on the 17th October. In 1944 Charles was one of a lucky crowd of fans who gathered outside Kettner's Restaurant hoping to catch a glimpse of Bing. Large gatherings were illegal and police and air-raid wardens, also concerned for the crowd's safety, suggested that Bing sing them a song. Bing famously sang 'Pennies From Heaven' and the satisfied gathering dispersed.

We extend our sincere condolences to family and friends.

TROUBADOUR

Only 6 copies of this enthralling book remain for sale. Please write to me if you wish to buy a copy and include a cheque or postal order for £15.99. You'll be sorry when they've all gone!

MEMBERSHIP

Your subscription reminder will be included with this issue of BING and may I appeal to all members for a prompt response. Our subscriptions were last raised in 2002 and we are still just about able to hold them at the same level. It was in 2002 that Gary Giddins described our magazine as the bargain of the century. We still think that is the case and naturally the ICC will be very grateful for any donation on top of their subscription that members care to make in recognition of this.

CALENDAR 2007

Ron Bosley has excelled once again with this new issue and please make sure to obtain a copy of this beautifully compiled calendar.

JONZO 46 & 47

These two CD issues are due at the end of this year and I urge all members to support John as he continues with this definitive and unequalled series.

LEEDS 2007

Date for your diary for the 42nd dinner/meeting is **Sunday 7th of October 2007.**

As the holiday season approaches may I wish every member joy and peace and please play your seasonal Bing favourites. Until spring, my kindest regards to all members.

Michael Crampton

Russ Rullman

We were sorry to learn of the death of Russ Rullman, a man who did so much in Crosbyana circles. He was a keen pilot who enjoyed flying to various Crosby events all over the USA and then enlivening the get-together with his news. Ken Crossland had a close relationship with Russ and he has penned the following thoughts.

"It's always one of the great pleasures of collecting, when a letter arrives out of the blue and proves to be the start of a wonderful friendship. That happened to me in June 1984 when Russ Rullman made contact to share with me his enthusiastic quest to track down the entire Bing and Buddy Cole library. We corresponded regularly, collaborated on articles for BINGANG and eventually met when Russ and his wife Jean made a 50th wedding anniversary trip to the UK for the Leeds meeting in 1989.

Of all the letters that I received from Russ, one has always stood out. If you read the extract below, you will understand why.

"I am a member of an organisation here called the Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters, made up of old actors, announcers etc. We have headquarters in the basement of Home Savings & Loan, which by coincidence is located on the exact corner of Sunset and Vine in Hollywood where NBC had its studios in the 30s and 40s, before they moved to Burbank and the old studios were torn down. In one of the old storerooms in our building, I discovered that PPB has practically all of the Crosby-Clooney shows of 1960-62, in original master 10" reels, 15ips, as cut and produced by Murdo Mackenzie ....."

Russ went on to say that there were 675 such shows – they were broadcast daily for two years – and "as of writing, I have pawed through tons of tapes and transcriptions to unearth these beauties and have in sight over 500 of the shows." And just for afters, Russ added that he had found "100 or so Ford Road Shows not known to others."

Russ was a contagious enthusiast in his love of Bing and at the end of a long and full life, it's a pleasure to think back to the excitement he felt sorting through his treasure find."

Ken Crossland

Move Over Harry Lillis–Here I Come

Earlier this year, we lost one of our enthusiastic younger USA members, Richard LeFevre, in an accidental house fire. He died just five months after his 26th birthday and his loss has of course been devastating to his parents. Wig and Laura Wiggins have naturally expressed their sincere condolences and in response Richard's parents forwarded a tribute to Richard which had appeared in the newspaper published in Richard's hometown of Rutland, Vermont. It was written by Richard's boss – Samuel J. Gorruso - under the above heading and it is a wonderful tribute to a very nice man. Here's an excerpt:

You may well ask, "So who the heck is Harry Lillis?" If you knew Richard Andrew LeFevre, you would know that Harry Lillis was Bing Crosby's real name. If you wanted to know anything about Bing such as what he was doing the day he died, Richard could tell you . . . One Saturday, I stopped by the office and as I came though the door I could hear a Bing Crosby tune coming from upstairs and heard Richard singing away at the top of his lungs – No, he couldn't sing. . .he always had a supply of his favorite food, Krispy Kreme donuts. . .God I hope there are Krispy Kreme donuts in heaven."

Bing Crosby Stadium rebuilt

Rhonda Way keeps us in touch with an important redevelopment.

I don't know how many places are named after Bing, but one of them, Bing Crosby Stadium, happens to be located in the town where I work, Front Royal, Virginia. Bing and Bing Crosby Stadium have been in the local news a lot lately because the stadium recently underwent a major $4.2 million renovation and is once again worthy of its name. The stadium, originally built in 1950, is now the premium stadium in this area.

The story of how the stadium in a small town in Virginia came to be named after Bing is a wonderful example of Bing's charm and generosity. Bing was first in this area in May of 1948 to be the Grand Marshal of a local event, The Apple Blossom Festival, held in Winchester, Virginia. Every year they have a celebrity grand marshal, with Bing, Bob Hope, and Lucille Ball being the most famous past grand marshals (in fact, they still use their names in advertising every year). While in the area, Bing graciously accepted a last-minute invitation to visit Front Royal. "Bing Crosby Night" was a smash and a wonderful time was had by all. While here, Bing made a donation to the building of a permanent recreation center in Front Royal (Bing's donation started the building fund drive).

Bing returned to Front Royal on April 1, 1950, for the dedication of Bing Crosby Stadium. The day, thereafter known as "Bing Crosby Day", was a day of fanfare and celebration, including the largest parade in Front Royal's history with Bing riding in a red jeep fire truck. Bing was given many gifts from the town including a gold inscribed watch, and a key to the city. Bing's visit brought the national media and many dignitaries to Front Royal, including the U.S. Vice President (Front Royal is about 90 miles west of Washington, DC), the Governors of Virginia and West Virginia, the Virginia Lieutenant Governor, both of the Virginia US Senators, the local US Congressman, and several Virginia State Senators and Delegates. Bing also premiered "Riding High" in Front Royal that night. Before the premiere, Bing put on a show accompanied by the Rhythmaires and Perry Botkin.

Both of Bing's visits were, of course, front page news, and the people of Front Royal were completely enamored with Bing. The news accounts of his visits refer over and over again to his warmth, charm, friendliness, sense of humor, etc. The people were clearly surprised that someone of Bing's stature was so down to earth, and they were touched that he had taken time out of his busy schedule to visit their town.

Front Royal's affection for Bing continues to this day. During the last weeks of the renovation project, the idea of trying to sell the name of the stadium to raise money for the renovation was put forth, but it quickly became clear that there was no support for it. In fact, the public made it clear that they continue to appreciate Bing's gift and want the stadium to continue to bear his name.

Rhonda Way

(Editor: Thanks, Rhonda and well done the people of Front Royal for keeping the name as it is. The grand reopening of the new $4 million stadium took place on July 22 and Bing was prominently mentioned in all the news coverage of the event. Bing's recordings were played throughout the day. The stadium will be home to the high schools' baseball teams along with the Valley League's Front Royal Cardinals.

And talking of places named after Bing...)

Met Theater renamed to honor Bing Crosby

At the end of September, we had the great news that the former Clemmer Theatre in downtown Spokane was to be renamed in honour of the city's most famous musical son. The Clemmer is now known as the Metropolitan Performing Arts Center and will become the Bing Crosby Theater.

Press coverage stated that the change of name would be "honoring the golden-throated crooner who grew up in Spokane and became one of the best-known entertainers of his time. Theater owner Mitch Silver said he saw an article in the Inlander newspaper proposing such a change, written by Eastern Washington

in *Dallas*) playing the General and Lorna Luft (Judy Garland's daughter) taking the part of the wisecracking housekeeper.

It's all good publicity for Bing! And talking of publicity...

Spotlight on Bing Crosby

This was the name of a stage show presented by the Camelot Theatre Company in Ashland, Oregon in September. The *Mail Tribune* of Southern Oregon gave us some background in their issue of September 15.

"Paul Jenny will present "Spotlight on Bing Crosby a Little Biography and a Lot of Music!" a program of songs and a little biography of the legendary crooner. The show will be the third in Camelot's Second Stage Music Series for 2006.

Jenny will be performing more than 20 songs that bear the unmistakable stamp of the mellow crooning, whistling and improvisational Crosby style. There will be "Slow Boat to China," "Where the Blue of the Night Meets the Gold of the Day," "Side By Side," "Ol' Man River," "St. Louis Blues," "Pennies from Heaven" and, of course, "White Christmas."

Jenny, who has been performing since he was 4, said, "I've got Bing in my DNA as most of us in our generation do." Speaking of Crosby's way of working with other musicians, actors and tech people, Jenny said: "Bing never got militant. He maintained a light touch with everyone he worked with. The way he appeared in the "Road" movies — snappy, improvised — that's how he worked."

Singing Crosby's songs is proving to be nostalgic for Jenny. "Some of these are songs I remember from my preschool days," Jenny said. "I'm working on finding the way to offer the song up in an authentic way without losing the original feel of it."

Part of the Spotlight format is to intersperse a bit about the artist's life between the songs. Jenny has been researching the life of Bing Crosby and putting together the story parts of the show.

"In writing the biography, I found myself writing in the way Bing used language," Jenny said. "He had a Jesuit education at Gonzaga High School in Spokane. He liked to play with language."

It's great to see shows like this taking place.

The Top 100 Pop Artists 1890-2002

In BING #139, we mentioned a web site put together by our member, Chuck Ford of Venice, Florida using the statistics produced by Joel Whitburn in his series of popular books. The site is still at www.vandammeford.com/cford/music but Chuck has revised and updated it.

The annual top ten has been discontinued as a means of determining the top artists for the entire period as it left out numerous significant artists such as James Brown and Rod Stewart who have very high overall scores, but do not score well in the annual top tens. Chuck has also expanded the top 50 to the top 100 and added some statistical detail on each artist.

So who is the top pop artist for the period? Yes, it's still our man. This is how the top ten looks.

1.	Bing Crosby	17038 points
2.	Elvis Presley	12759
3.	Paul Whiteman	11724
4.	Guy Lombardo	10713
5.	Tommy Dorsey	9283
6.	Billy Murray	8756
7.	Perry Como	7814
8.	Benny Goodman	7623
9.	Frank Sinatra	7392
10.	Elton John	6940

Chick also has a section devoted to the most popular records based on weeks in the charts etc. Here's the top ten.

1.	White Christmas	Bing Crosby	229pts
2.	Near You	Frances Craig	195
3.	Don't Be Cruel / Hound Dog	Elvis Presley	171
4.	Frenesi	Artie Shaw	160
5.	My Blue Heaven	Gene Austin	158
6.	Dardanella	Ben Selvin	157
7.	Paper Doll	Mills Brothers	157
8.	Singin' The Blues	Guy Mitchell	156
9.	Physical	Olivia Newton-John	156
10.	Tennessee Waltz	Patti Page	156

Bing's recording of 'Sweet Leilani' comes in No. 52 followed by 'Swinging On A Star' at #81 and 'Pennies From Heaven' at #86.

'White Christmas' is top again

Apart from being top in Chuck's list, Bing's 'White Christmas' is listed in the 2007 edition of The Guinness Book of World Records as the biggest selling single of all time with an estimated 50 million sales. 'Candle In The Wind' is shown as the biggest seller since charts began with around 30-33 million. The references to Bing having the most hits of all time seem to have been excluded from the 2007 edition and, much to our surprise, our proud claim to be oldest running fan club has disappeared. We are writing to the compilers seeking an explanation.

But, as the holiday season approaches, it is nice to know that Bing's record is again officially recognised as

the biggest selling single of all time. Bearing in mind the number of compilation albums which have contained Bing's version, it must be the biggest selling recording of all time as well. We'll tell the Guinness people that too.

Merry Christmas, From Bing

In our last issue, we mentioned the Christmas gifts sent to President Eisenhower by Bing and now Greg Van Beek expands on the theme.

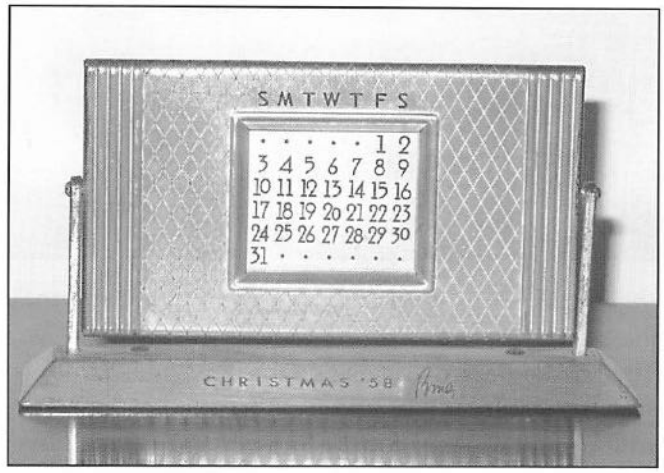
If you were fortunate enough to be counted amongst Bing's extended family, friends or his business partners, you could always count on a special little trinket or gadget arriving just in time for Christmas. It was Bing's way of remembering those he was most fond of in a more personal way during the holidays than just via a Christmas card, which, of course, he would also send. With the Christmas Season of 2006 at hand, and with all of us getting ready for the exchange of gifts and presents, I thought it might be fun to take a look back at some of the items Bing was sending out as gifts at Christmastime.

Beginning in 1949, Bing partnered with the Colby lighter company to give as gifts specially marked pocket lighters that read in block letters "Christmas 1949" and were engraved with the signature "Bing". These were given out for several consecutive years, and examples of two such lighters are pictured below. On the left is a lighter dating from 1954, featuring a miniature color photo of Bing in Santa Claus garb, holding a sack of presents, and standing by the tree from the finale of the movie "White Christmas". It says, in Bing's handwriting, "A White Christmas Bing Crosby". On the right is a polished lighter dating from 1951 with an inscription engraved in Bing's handwriting "Christmas Greetings 1951 Bing Crosby".

For the golf lover on Bing's shopping list in 1950, a sterling silver neck-tie clasp was sent out, embossed on the backside "Christmas '50" and featuring the engraved signature "Bing". On the front side was a miniature golf club serving as the tie clasp. A tiny pearl was fastened to the driver end of the club as a facsimile golf ball.

In 1956, Bing sent out a unique little pendant or charm in the shape of a flat disc with a chain attached. At the end of the chain is a miniature horseshoe, an obvious reference to Bing's longtime love of the ponies. Possibly this item could also have been used as a key chain. Either way, it's a nice little trinket, dating to the Christmas Season of exactly fifty years ago.

In 1957, Bing sent out a solid silver money clip, containing a retractable pocketknife and nail file. It was engraved "Christmas '57 Bing". Bing wanted his friends to get the most out of his gift in 1958, so he gave them a desk calendar that can be used for fifty years! Using a lever on the back of the calendar, you simply align the month and year in the window, and the calendar on the front side shifts into the correct position to correspond with the correct days of the week for each year. I've been using this little gem for several years now, and it will be a sad occasion in 2009 when its lifespan expires.



Wallets or billfolds were a popular gift item with Bing, and he sent them out several different years. Pictured over is a cowhide breast pocket wallet with attached gold plated Eversharp pencil. It's embossed in gold foil "Christmas 1959" with the facsimile "Bing" signature. Another undated cowhide billfold is shown below, with a silver band at the fold engraved in Bing's handwriting

University journalism professor Bill Stimson.

"It was a fantastic idea," said Silver, who bought the theater from Metropolitan Mortgage & Securities Co. in 2004. Stimson contacted Bing's widow, Kathryn Crosby, and said she was so behind the idea "she offered to come here for a benefit" to raise money, and to perform a cabaret she's created that includes several of Crosby's best-known hits. The benefit, set for Dec. 8, is expected to raise about $30,000 to pay for new theater signs.

"We hope to have the new sign up by December, so Kathryn can see it when she arrives," Stimson said. Silver said he also will revise the theater's lobby displays to showcase Crosby's impact on music. Built in 1914 and called the Clemmer, the theater was refurbished in the 1980s by Metropolitan Mortgage's president, Paul Sandifur."

This really is a wonderful development and we have supplied detailed information to Bill Stimson about Bing's early appearances at the theatre for use in the publicity. Our thanks go to Bill and the *Advocates for the Bing Crosby Theater group* which was formed to help make the most of Spokane's two main civic assets – Bing and the theatre. *Advocates for the Bing Crosby Theater* plans to become a permanent cultural group that will raise money to support appropriate use of the theater. They have already begun to explore sponsorship of such things as film festivals, music festivals and "family friendly" theater opportunities. They also hope to collect and put on permanent display in the theater photos, movie posters, and other memorabilia connected with Bing's career.

Meanwhile, remember the Bing Crosby Restaurant which opened a year or two back? Well, they've opened another one. Here's what *The Desert Sun* newspaper of October 17 had to say about the new place in Palm Springs.

Bing's back in town

Restaurant opens with crooner's name

Bing is back. Or at least an upscale restaurant paying tribute to the late Bing Crosby, world-famous crooner and actor, had its soft opening Monday evening in Rancho Mirage.

Jeff Dudum, whose Walnut Creek-based Dudum Sports & Entertainment is launching the celebrity-themed Bing Crosby Restaurant & Piano Lounge, believes the location at the southwest corner of Rancho Las Palmas on Highway 111 is an ideal mid-valley site.

That's because the legendary singer, Academy Award-winning actor and entrepreneur was also a golf lover who touted the Coachella Valley as a favorite getaway spot when he was with family, friends and other celebrities such as Bob Hope.

Crosby not only frequented area golf courses, but in 1958 he was named "honorary mayor of Palm Desert." Crosby was instrumental in the success of Shadow Mountain Resort, where his sons swam the club's figure-8-shaped pool.

"He represents Mr. Americana in my mind," said Dudum, who along with chef and partner Frank Palmer and managing partner Schuyler Adams was putting the finishing touches Monday on the 8,000-square-foot restaurant. Adams, who previously was opening PF Chang Chino Bistros in the Pacific Northwest, called the concept "sort of a tribute to the '40s-style supper club, and that gives us a magical stage to operate on."

Dudum said Bing's widow, Kathryn Crosby, provided many family black-and-white photos to adorn the walls.

"I love the one of Crosby, with Louie Armstrong, Grace Kelly and Frank Sinatra," Dudum said.

The restaurant cost upwards of $450 per square foot to develop and will feature live entertainment, a lounge that accommodates 70 and private rooms for parties up to 50 patrons. It's designed to appeal to everyone from "thirtysomethings looking for a hip and cool place that never goes out of style" all the way to folks who enjoyed Bing's era first-hand, Dudum said.

****

The grand opening was scheduled for November 8 with Kathryn Crosby in attendance.

It's A 'White Christmas' all over the place

Irving Berlin's White Christmas, the stage version of Bing's 1954 Hollywood musical, was made available for professional licensing beginning in August 2006 and is now appearing in all sorts of places.

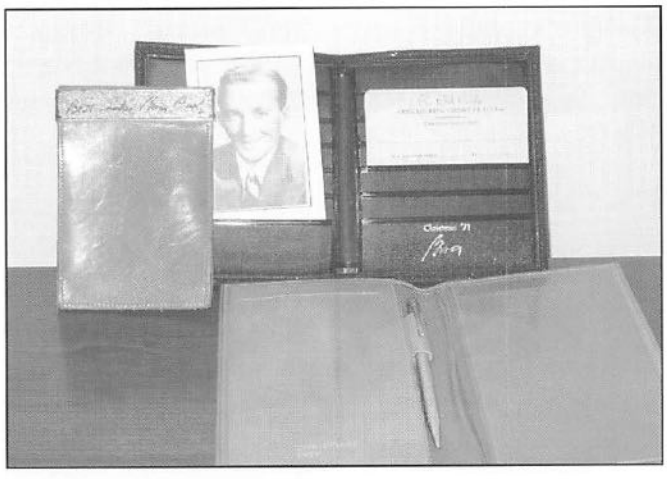
The stage property had its world premiere in 2000 under the guidance of Paul Blake at the famed outdoor theatre, The Muny, in St. Louis. The show was further refined by Broadway producers Kevin McCollum and Jeffrey Seller, and a fresh creative team, prior to being presented in San Francisco in 2004, and then in triplicate in 2005 — three concurrent Broadway-sized companies performing in San Francisco, Boston and Los Angeles.

The 2004-05 production will now play the Fox Theater in Detroit, and The Ordway in St. Paul during the 2006 holidays. The show has already been seen in St. Louis in July this year and it is also scheduled to appear in Sacramento.

In the 2006-07 season, smaller Equity theatres now have the option to stage their own productions of the show. Seattle's 5th Avenue Theatre and The Actors Playhouse at the Miracle Theatre in Coral Gables, FL, have announced their own resident productions of *Irving Berlin's White Christmas* for 2006-07.

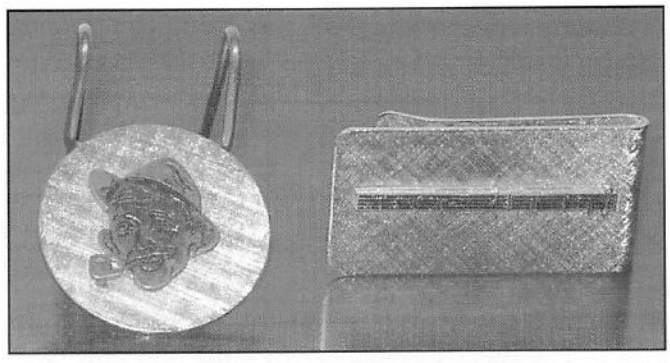
In the UK, the musical will be seen first in Plymouth and will then move to Southampton over the holiday period. Craig McLachlan (*Neighbours, Home & Away*) plays the Bing role ('Bob Wallace'), Tim Flavin takes the Danny Kaye part with Ken Kercheval ('Cliff Barnes'

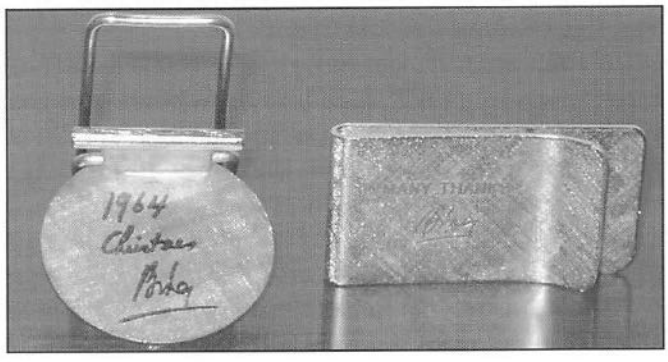
"Best Wishes Bing Crosby". This was a multi-purpose gift; it could be sent out at any time of the year, as it makes no reference to Christmas. The third wallet pictured is shown complete with Club Crosby membership cards (not actually sent with the wallet, but nonetheless just seem to belong in a Bing Crosby wallet). It's also embossed in gold foil, dating to Christmas '71 with the facsimile signature "Bing".



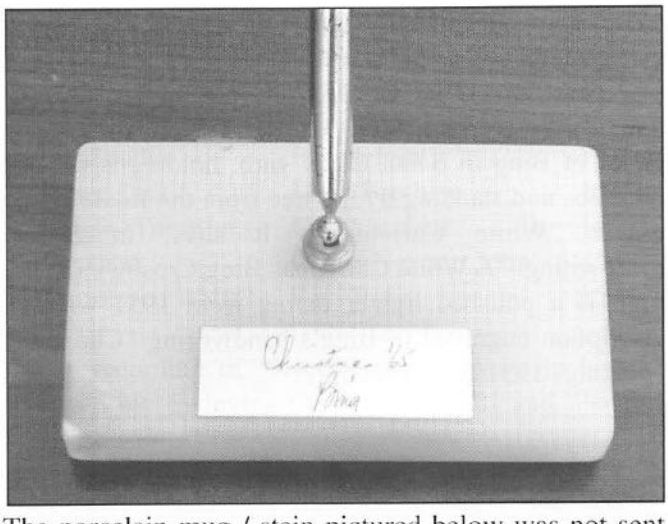
1962's gift was a round keychain fob, with a retractable knife and nail file. It's perhaps the most personal of all gifts, as it features a St. Christopher's medal on one side, a nod to Bing's deep religious convictions and to the true spirit of the Season. It is imprinted on the reverse side "Christmas Greetings 1962", with Bing's full signature.

Money clips were another popular gift item from Bing. Pictured below are front and back poses of two of them. The one on the right is undated, and features a musical scale on the front side and is embossed on the reverse with "Many Thanks" and the facsimile signature "Bing". This is another one of those multi-purpose gifts that could be sent out at any time of the year in appreciation for someone's kindness concerning Bing. The money clip on the left features the familiar caricature of Bing that's used on the label of all of the Spokane series of LP's from the 1970's and 80's on the front side, and is embossed in Bing's handwriting on the reverse side "1964 Christmas Bing".

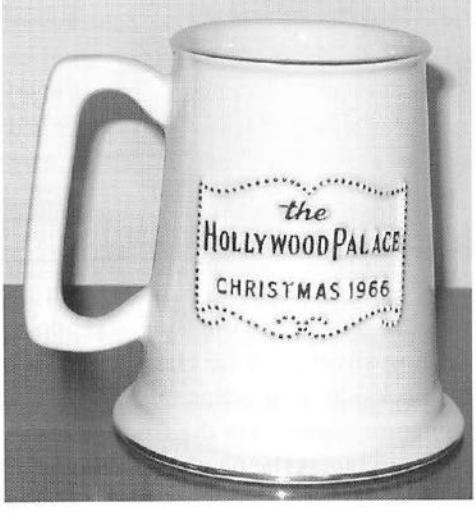




For 1965, Bing sent out a gift that undoubtedly cost him a lot in postage! It is a solid marble base desk penholder, with an attached brass plate engraved in Bing's handwriting "Christmas '65 Bing". A timeless gift that still looks great on a desk!



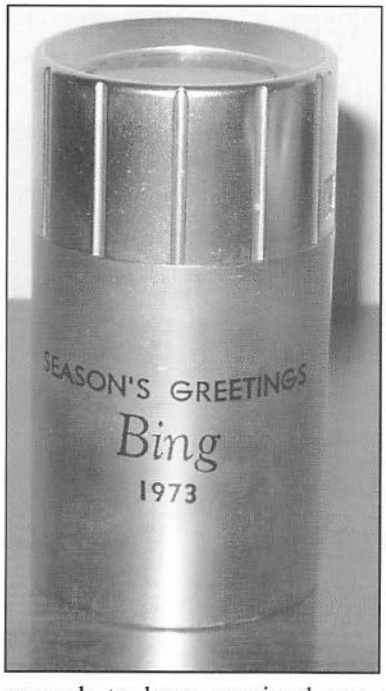
The porcelain mug / stein pictured below was not sent out by Bing directly. Indirectly, however, it's still a Christmas gift from Bing. It was given out to the cast and crew who worked on his annual Christmas TV "special", the Christmas Eve



episode of The Hollywood Palace from 1966. It features the famous Hollywood Palace lighted proscenium arch silhouetted around the Palace logo.

For the gambler on his shopping list in 1967, Bing sent out a unique leather book containing a deck of playing cards, a notepad for keeping score, and a gold Eversharp pencil. It has a gold plate attached to the cover, similar to the plate on the 1965 pen holder that reads "Christmas '67 Bing" engraved in Bing's handwriting.

In 1968, Bing sent out a sterling silver serving plate measuring seven inches in diameter. It was engraved "Noel 1968 Bing & Kathryn". In 1970, a black- vinyl covered business contact information 'rolodex' was the gift, embossed with "Christmas 1970" on the cover, with the facsimile signature "Bing". 1973's gift was a bit of an oddity; a miniature battery powered flashlight! Made of plastic, I imagine this was best suited to a traveler, as it could fit easily in one's carry on luggage. It featured a self-contained battery with a 5-year lifespan. Unfortunately, the lifespan expired 25 years ago, so this example is not working. It's embossed with "Season's Greetings Bing 1973" on its side.



So there you have just a sampling of some of the many Christmas gifts sent out from Bing over the years. It all goes to show just how generous Bing truly was to his many friends. If you're lucky enough to have received one of these trinkets, it's a treasure to be sure. After all, how many people can boast that they received a Christmas present from "the voice of Christmas" himself!

Merry Christmas, From Greg.

Riding a Star and Riding it High: A Celebration for High Society

Martin McQuade attended a wonderful celebration of the 50th anniversary of *High Society* in August and he sends his report.

A screen goddess languorously swoons to the sound of Bing Crosby. That caption could be used for a host of luminous shots embedded in moviegoers' memories, among them Leila Hyams in *The Big Broadcast*, Marion Davies in *Going Hollywood*, Carole Lombard in *We're Not Dressing*, Joan Bennett in *Mississippi* and *Two for Tonight*, Ida Lupino in *Anything Goes*, Frances Farmer in *Rhythm on the Range*, Dorothy Lamour in *The Road to*...films and *Dixie*, Betty Hutton in *Here Come the Waves*, Joan Caulfield in *Blue Skies* and *Welcome Stranger*, *Joan Fontaine in Emperor Waltz*, Rhonda Fleming in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*.

The apotheosis of this stellar litany and the last great flowering of the romantic Crosby is *High Society*, in which Grace Kelly is limpidly aroused by the eroticism of a voice at its seductive peak. The euphoric spell cast by this pastel-colored delight has always, for me, far exceeded the particulars of its MGM production, Charles Walters's direction, Philip Barry's play and Cole Porter's twilight score. The appeal has always lain in the realization that the debonair and alluring Crosby of the early thirties was still going strong well into the late fifties, and that the continuous arc of a magnificent stardom remained unbroken and unchallenged, thanks, in no small measure, to the chemistry sparked by a sublime feminine ideal, perhaps the most incandescent, sensuous and ethereal beauty of her time, in her farewell to her art.

Their celluloid rapport, first manifest two years earlier in Kelly's 1954 Oscar – winner, *The Country Girl*, and hinted at in *Rear Window* (in which the disembodied Crosby is heard singing *To See You Is to Love You*) culminated not only in MGM's most successful 1956 release but in a Capitol gold record for both, *True Love*, the best friend a concertina ever had.

Fifty years have passed since this fountain-of-youth refreshed enchanted audiences; a span which saw Grace Kelly emerge from the Hollywood hierarchy to become enshrined and immortalized in the absolute pantheon of modern myths and which witnessed Crosby's recognition as the pivot of twentieth century popular culture; a span which has seen new generations of Crosby fans, a world-wide cult exalt *La Princess,* and the recent passing of the title, *Sovereign Prince of Monaco* from Rainier III to Albert II.

HSH Prince Albert's fealty to his regal mother was made evident this summer when he paid homage to the demi-centennial of her swan song in the very town where it took place: Newport, Rhode Island. Here, on Saturday, August 12, 2006, amidst a rebirth of the gilded age which made *the Ocean City* world – renowned, HSH was guest-of-honor at a *swellegant, elegant* party in Marble House, once considered the most lavish home in America. The soiree was hosted by Brian O'Neill, owner of the Carnegie Abbey Club in nearby Portsmouth, Rhode Island, a highly exclusive golf, equestrian and yachting club in nearby Portsmouth, R.I. Proceeds of the evening benefited The Princess Grace Foundation.

Since mid-spring, I had been assisting Linda Phillips, of the New England – based public relations firm Phillips Communications, with certain preparations for this affair, serving as liaison with the Crosby family, and facilitating the participation, as honored guests, of Celeste Holm, the last surviving star of the film, and Phoebe Jacobs, executive director of the Louis Armstrong Educational Foundation. (Both Kathryn and Mary Crosby tendered their regrets early on due to prior commitments and a last-minute conflict prevented Harry Crosby, scheduled in the program as an honored guest, from attending.).

Ms. Phillips kindly extended an invitation to me and a guest for the *High Society* celebration. Patti Dey, fellow ICC member and east coast representative for *Bing's Friends and Collectors Society*, accompanied me on this adventure. Ms. Phillips also permitted me, in my capacity as an American correspondent for this periodical, to join in a press conference with HSH in the magnificent golden anteroom of the mansion.

Before proceeding, a digression: On August 11th, the night before the party, the venerable *Newport Jazz Festival* (rechristened *The JVC Jazz Festival*) opened at The International Tennis Hall of Fame. This being one of the raisons d'etre for *High Society*, it was essential to attend. The evening's fare, with HSH and Ms. Holm in attendance, was entitled *Dear Mr. Sinatra*, and was performed by singer John Pizzarelli and his Big Band. His father, the veteran guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli was special guest for the concert. He demonstrated his considerable instrumental skills on several numbers. Afterwards the elder Pizzarelli took time to discuss Bing with me.

I never worked with Bing but he was the greatest singer. I knew Bing's guitarist Perry Botkin quite well. I remember Perry's son wanted to acquire his father's guitar when he died. Do you know that Gene Autry beat him to it!

Also on that Friday, there was a champagne reception and showing of *High Society* at The Jane Pickens Theater and Events Center. As described in the flyer, it was in *honor of the 50th anniversary of the filming of this movie in Newport.* (In fact, the residence which was used for the exteriors of C.K. Dexter-Haven's home, now Salve Regina University, is just down the road from Marble House on Bellevue Avenue). The prince's motorcade deferentially slowed down as it passed the theater on its way to the concert. It was no wonder that the screening was completely sold out, for it seems that every one of the townsfolk in this Yankee bastion of wealth holds the film in very high esteem.

The press conference was a bit late to start. Among those waiting were Ron Claiborne of *Good Morning America Weekend Edition* and representatives from the Associated Press and People Magazine. The original soundtrack album of *High Society*, with the bright oil painting of Crosby, Kelly, and Sinatra, was brought along, and a good idea it was: several of the cameramen took shots of it to accent their local news coverage.

Finally, Mr. O'Neill ushered HSH, Ms. Holm and Ms. Jacobs into the vast chamber. They were seated in front of a bank of microphones at a table with a Carnegie Abbey banner draped behind. Ms. Phillip's made introductory remarks, and the questioning began. Mr. Claiborne started, asking the radiant Ms. Holm if she had any memories of the making of *High Society*. Her reply was brief. Without offering any specifics, she said that it was a particularly wonderful time of her life, perhaps the most joyous of her career.

Celeste Holm enjoys the celebration.

With the LP in my hand this reporter was selected to pose the second question.

Your Serene Highness, my name is Martin McQuade, and I represent the International Club Crosby. Many here may not realize that your mother, Princess Grace, was a million - selling recording artist. I am of course referring to 'True Love', included on this soundtrack album. It was just one aspect of your mother's multi-faceted professional relationship with Bing Crosby. Have you any reminiscences of Bing Crosby visiting the Palace or his friendship with your mother and father?

Before answering my query, HSH made a few remarks stating how thrilled he was to be honoring *High Society* and to be in the company of Ms. Holm and Ms. Jacobs. He also commented on the warm atmosphere his mother always said surrounded the making of the film. He then graciously volunteered the following.

Bing Crosby did come to visit us a number of times. I was very little. He loved to play golf. He did play golf at the Monaco golf club. After a round of golf he came to visit us at our family summer property which is right near the golf club. We still have a family movie of Bing coming into the property with his clubs on his arm and taking a few swings, trying to impress my father.

Celeste Holm could not resist a question. *Was he a good golfer?*

I was too young to remember, but I think he was.

A few other questions regarding matters of state and royal succession were asked. One final inquiry was allowed. Again, to my exhilaration, the finger pointed at me.

Ms. Holm, You once contrasted the working styles of Bing Crosby and Frank Sinatra on the set of High Society, saying that Bing was so cool and Frank was so energetic. Would you elaborate upon that?

Well, Sinatra never wanted to rehearse, he never wanted to do it; and Bing on the other hand respected the amount of spontaneity that rehearsal always gives. And it was interesting to be caught in the middle!

With that delightful observation the all-too-brief press conference came to an end and the gala commenced. Before dinner, the invited guests repaired to the sprawling veranda for a cocktail hour, during which the DVD of *High Society* was shown on strategically placed television monitors. Again, the *High Society* record, perched on a center table, attracted much attention.

HSH, who was whisked away for an interview with Mr. Claiborne for a *Good Morning America* segment, soon reemerged. He seemed so affable and down-to-earth that I did not think that it would be *lese majeste* to approach him.

Your Highness, please let me personally thank you for your recollections.

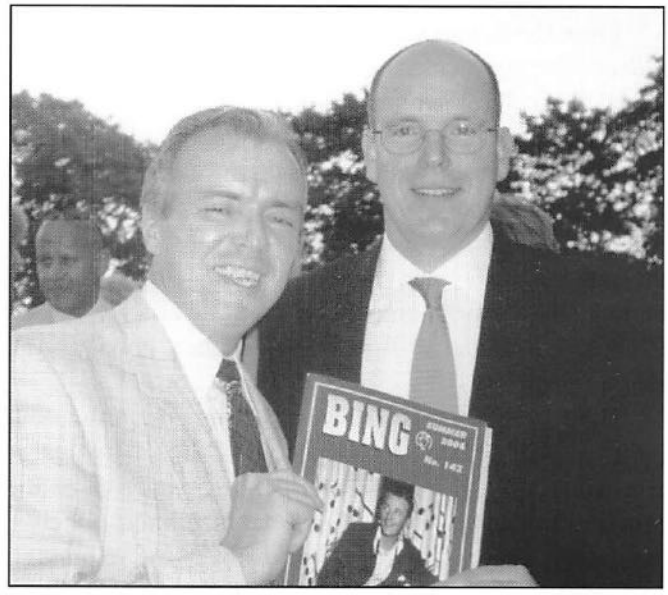
But, of course. Bing was very dear to my mother. We listened to him often and he meant very much to my mother.

I had heard that the gold record of *True Love* was prominently displayed in the palace in Monaco. *Was this so?* HSH confirmed this. I went further. *Was the gold record a wedding gift from Bing?* HSH did not think that it was. He went on to relate an amusing anecdote about the recording.

When the recording of True Love became a million-seller, Frank Sinatra was jealous. He said to my mother, the first time you open your mouth, and look what happens!

The most recent issue of *BING* (#143) was shown to HSH. A bevy of fetching and glamorous young ladies, thronging about him, vied for his attention, but was dismayed to hear; ***hold off, I'm reading about Bing.*** A clearing was formed while he absorbed himself with the magazine. I asked if he would like membership in the ICC and he replied most affirmatively, putting me in touch with his aide for this express purpose.

This was no *noblesse oblige*. Quite the contrary; his genuine interest in Crosby was undeniable. In fact, HSH made an exception to his prohibition against photographs being taken outside the confines of the press conference and, to my astonishment, consented to posing with me and *BING*. It is my feeling that it is incumbent upon me to offer HSH a token of appreciation for the kindness he afforded both me and the ICC, and so membership for him has been arranged.



HSH Albert II (right) with Martin and BING magazine.

At this time invitations for commemorative screenings of *High Society*, planned for this fall in New York, were extended to HSH, Ms. Jacobs and Ms. Holm. The latter also waxed enthusiastically when I had an opportunity to show her BING 143. Pointing to the cover, she exclaimed, ***oh my, Bing looks seven!***

The official program for the gala included some

background information on the film, including this: *High Society was filmed during Grace Kelly's engagement to Prince Rainier III of Monaco, and in the movie she wears the engagement ring given to her by Prince Rainier*

The evening commenced with the presentation of the colors by the Color Guard of the U.S. Naval War College. John Lehman, secretary of the navy under President Reagan, was an invited guest. Mr. Lehman is chairman of the Princess Grace Foundation-USA.

Entertainment for the banquet, also accented with TV screens showing *High Society*, was provided by Peter Duchin and his orchestra. During a break, the right moment was found to speak to him. Again, *BING* was handy and it was displayed to the son of Eddy Duchin, Crosby's pianist for the last Kraft Music Hall season (1946). Mr. Duchin became animated at the mention of his name and sight of his image.

My dear friend Bing. I would do anything for him. I remember so many good times with him, particularly wonderful fishing trips.

Does Mr. Duchin have all of the collaborations of his father with Crosby? *No. I have several of the Kraft shows on clumsy sixteen inch transcription discs.* He seemed considerably elevated by the promise of them in the near future.

A nostalgic note was struck when Celeste Holm joined her husband, vocalist Frank Basile, for a rendition of *True Love.* The dance floor quickly filled up for this most poignant moment.

Once the dinner was over, HSH addressed the *gentle folk of Newport*, declaring his gratitude to all present. He signaled out the members of the Crosby family, saying how he regretted their absence, personally asking me to convey his best wishes to them. The festivities concluded with an auction of *The High Society Fiftieth Anniversary Pins* (The final bids for these were fifteen thousand dollars each) and the presentation of gifts, including lifetime membership in the Carnegie Abbey Club to HSH, and a Simon Pearce glass bowl to Ms. Holm.

Before departing, there was one more opportunity to interact with HSH. He was given a gift package consisting of the omnipresent *High Society* disc; the program for *What a Swell Party*, the recent retrospective by the Film Society of Lincoln Center; the exhibition catalogue for the Crosbyana exhibition assembled by me for the Hofstra Conference; and a long-cherished souvenir from my father who was a projectionist: a strip of 70mm horizontal Vista Vision film from Alfred Hitchcock's *To Catch a Thief* showing Grace Kelly and Cary Grant in a sports-car overlooking the Riviera in Monaco. Thus came to an end a magical never-to-be-forgotten encounter.

Reality can mirror fantasy. This summer sojourn to Newport, Rhode I. proved that axiom, underlining the quintessence of *High Society*. Class barriers are easy to overcome – and transcend – when a special kind of regal charm casts its spell. The dream of Barry and Porter and MGM came true for this Crosby devotee, and a most special royal performed the miracle.

A few days after my return from Newport I conveyed by telephone the felicitations from HSH to the Crosby family. Mary expanded on the Crosby visit to Monaco.

My grandmother – a school teacher from Texas – came with us to the Palace in Monaco for an outdoor lunch. My mother was nervous about what to wear. She wanted to do her best to look beautiful. Well, Grace Kelly wore pedal pushers – or Capri pants – covered with grease! My grandmother said to Prince Rainier, "Rainey Honey, keep Albert away from those sharp utensils. He's gonna cut himself."

The celebration, begun in Newport, of the 50th anniversary of *High Society* (it premiered in August, 1956 at Radio City Music Hall) will continue this fall in New York with two events which I have organized. There will be a commemorative screening, introduced by Kathryn Crosby, at the Museum of Modern Art on Wednesday, October 18th. There will also be a tribute at The Players Club in Gramercy Park on Sunday afternoon, October 22nd. This will consist of a screening, a brunch, and a question and answer session with Mrs. Crosby. A brief report will appear in the next issue of BING.

Martin McQuade – September 15, 2006.

(Editor: It was nice to see that 'High Society' was celebrated in London in the UK too, albeit on a far smaller scale. John Benstead drew my attention to the showing of the film in July at the Ritz in Brixton and at the Clapham Picture House. In both cases, a discussion about the film took place after its showing.

I am constantly amazed by Martin's 'adventures' on the Bing front. You will remember that in our last issue he described his tour of the Brooklyn Paramount with Kathryn Crosby and others. I had fully intended to use a photo of Kathryn seated at one of the mighty Wurlitzers but in the usual general panic of putting the magazine together this was overlooked. However it was such a nice picture and in view of the next article. I am reproducing it now.)

She Came, She Sang, She Conquered

On October 15, 2006, on the campus of Hofstra University at the John Cranford Adams Playhouse, Kathryn Crosby performed her cabaret act ***My Life with Bing***. She performed to the delight of several hundred

guests, young and young at heart.

Kathryn, looking lovely as always, opened the show with *Thank You Very Much* from the musical *Oliver.* The highly accomplished Edward Sayegh accompanied her on piano through out the show.

Mrs. Crosby began her story at the beginning…in West Columbia, Texas and quickly advanced to the day she met Bing as she walked past his dressing room on the movie lot and he greeted her with "Howdy Tex. What's your hurry?" She described with warmth, humor, and images, their numerous failed attempts to complete their wedding plans, Bing's many female suitors including most of the beautiful young starlets throughout Hollywood and then taking a break for a year in an effort to forget him. In the end they found a way to marry, raise a family and make it all work. The story of her life with Bing was told through song, images and film.

Kathryn shared the stage with some very talented performers throughout the show. In addition to Edward Sayegh, the beautiful singer, Malina Kalomas performed *Love, You Didn't Do Right by Me,* originally performed by Rosemary Clooney in *White Christmas.* Kathryn joined her on stage for their duet *Sisters,* also from *White Christmas.* As the well-paced afternoon of remembering Bing continued, Harry Crosby and his guitar treated us all to a surprise guest appearance. He sang *In a Little Spanish Town* in a soft duet with his mother reminding us of the Crosby Family Christmas Shows and a very young Harry accompanying his father in song. It was a memorable moment.

The afternoon showcased Kathryn's love of performing and love for her family. Many of the songs were Bing's but they were performed in Kathryn's definitive style, and always respectful of Bing. The songs included, *Pennies From Heaven, Second Time Around* and *Moonlight Becomes You.* This last song was sung to a pictorial tribute of Bing and his only daughter, Mary. The show included songs performed by Bing, courtesy of the full screen on stage. Memorable was the *Don't Fence Me In* film clip complete with the bouncing ball for the audience sing along. The show concluded

with the image of Bing from one of his shows singing *White Christmas* and being joined on the Hofstra stage by Kathryn, Harry and Malina and audience participation.

After the performance, Kathryn graciously had a Q and A session with her audience who included some unabashed fans. As they asked questions, they gushed and she made them feel special.

We left the theater with a song in our hearts, a generous gift of her book in our hands, and feeling better for having been part of this day. We were given a glimpse of the man, husband, father, sportsman, as well as the performer Kathryn knew, and to see a glimpse of the woman he married.

Jane Stoutenborough
Albany, Georgia

(Editor: Our grateful thanks to Jane for undertaking this assignment at short notice.)

TRADING POST

Entries are free for all items of Crosbyana and there is a nominal charge of $3 or £2 for non-Crosby advertisements. All items are printed in good faith and we cannot accept responsibility for any dissatisfaction arising from the transaction as a result of these entries
Please send all advertisements to the Editor

Gord Atkinson, 14 Castle Harbour Crt., Ottawa, ON K2S 1B9, Canada.

Gord's *The Crosby Years* series remains available direct from him. US members can obtain the CDs for $15.00 US each which includes postage. Canadian purchasers should pay CAN $17.00 for each CD. Payment can be made by check or money order to Gord Atkinson. Please note that USA members may send US dollar checks.

UK, Irish and European members who wish to obtain the CDs should contact Malcolm Macfarlane. The CDs cost £10 each.

Michael Crampton, address on inside front cover.

Michael has many spare copies of old issues of BING magazine and please contact him if you would like to pick some up for a nominal price. Also, there are still some copies left of the excellent book covering Bing's TV appearances.

M. Curl, Dorset, UK (tel. 01202 897398)

FOR SALE: BING CROSBY by Timothy Morgereth (McFarland) 1987. £15 plus postage at cost. This is a 554 page hardback discography of radio shows/films/78's and is in mint condition.

WANTED: Bing on TV – A Dean Martin Show from October 19, 1967 with Bing and Lena Horne as guests. Also *Song By Song* by Alan J. Lerner [ITV 1979]. VHS or DVD acceptable. Your price paid for quality copy.

Festival Films, 6115 Chestnut Terrace, Shorewood, MN 55331, USA (Tel. & Fax: (952) 470-2172, e-mail: Fesfilms@aol.com)

Ron Hall at Festival Films can meet all your requirements for Bing on DVD and video. See also www.FesFilms.com

Ken Mason, 12 Wycomb Grove, Melton Mowbray, Leics. LE13 1EQ, UK (Tel: 01664 851930, e-mail: kenneth.mason@ntlworld.com)

BING BINDERS

Ken offers specially made binders for storing up to ten copies of BING magazine. The covers are blue with BING engraved in gold on the spine. Cost is now £7.50 for the UK, £8.50 Europe and £9.50 for rest of world (all including postage).

The Record Centre, 45-46 Loveday St., Birmingham B4 6NR, UK (Tel: 0121-359-7399, e-mail: Raypurslow@blueyonder.co.uk)

Ray Purslow and his team are real supporters of the Crosby cause and for your Bing CDs (and LPs) contact Ray.

Redmond Nostalgia Company, P O Box 82, Redmond, WA 98073-0082, USA. (Tel: (425) 774-1819, Fax (425) 774-8076, web site: http://www.redmondnostalgia.com/

e-mail: redmondnostalgia@aol.com)

David Kiner offers a comprehensive list of 361 Bing Crosby CDs. Each CD is one hour long containing two 30 minute radio programs, unless otherwise noted. All programs have been professionally re-mastered for excellent sound quality. All CDs are professionally printed and come sealed in cases with printed inserts.

See the company's web site for details of what is available.

Clive Roberts, "Dale View", 67 Leeds Rd., Otley, West Yorkshire, LS21 3BW, UK (Tel: 01943 851449, email: clive@robertsclive.wanadoo.co.uk)

Clive has been receiving many requests from previous clients to put on another Hollywood Tour similar to the Starline trips we reported on some years ago. He has now organised such a trip for October 2007 and please contact him for details.

Stan Woodford, 6 Mariam Gardens, Hornchurch, Essex, RM12 6QA, UK (tel. 01708 445049)

Stan has on offer many VHS (UK format) video items and film song compilations of Bing that may be of interest. SAE for lists please.

Worlds Records, P. O. Box 1922, Novato CA 94947, USA (phone: 1-800-742-6663) http://www.worldsrecords.com/

Try this company for imported CDs from the UK and elsewhere.

****

Crosby Clubs Around The World

The ICC is pleased to be associated with the following Crosby organisations.

Bing's Friends And Collectors Society,

Hobie and Cathie Wilson, 426 Park Place Drive, Petaluma, California 94954-6647, USA (tel. [707] 762-5570 - e-mail bingsfriends81@sbcglobal.net –

website:

www.geocities.com/one_sonoma_rose/BingsHomePage.html

The Society celebrated its 25th anniversary this year.

The Australian Bing Crosby Club (formerly The Victorian Bing Crosby Society)

Bob Neate, 22 Pakenham St., Blackburn, Victoria, Australia 3130. (tel. [03] 9877 1983)

Internet sites:

Bing Crosby Internet Museum:

www.mcckc.edu/~crosby

A wonderful site which carries up-to-date news and has a lively discussion board. Not to be missed by those on the net.

The Immortal Talents of Bing Crosby

http://www.geocities.com/BourbonStreet/3754/bing.html

This is a most impressive web site maintained by our member, Crissi Newton. Well worth a look.

****

OTHER APPRECIATION SOCIETIES

We have reciprocal arrangements with the following clubs and societies for publicity purposes. They kindly advertise our club in their magazines and we are very pleased to return the favour.

In Tune International, Flat 9, Milchester House, 12 Staveley Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN20 7JX, UK, (Tel/Fax: +44 (0) 1323 412698

e-mail: gerry@stonestreet13.freeserve.co.uk,

website: www.GnuDawn.co.uk/intune)
Described as the magazine for lovers of the golden age of popular music, this excellent periodical contains 40 pages about nostalgic and easy listening music. Subscriptions, which cover six issues, are £18 for the UK, £22 for Europe and £32.50 for the rest of the world. Payment can be made by credit card.

Memory Lane, P. O. Box 1939, Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 3UH, England. (www.memorylane.org.uk

e-mail: mail@memorylane.org.uk)

Memory Lane is a lively magazine specialising in music of the 1920s through to the 1950s. Although the emphasis is placed on British dance bands and vocalists of the 1930s and 1940s, *Memory Lane* also covers the American scene, jazz, big bands, personalities, music hall and variety artistes. Regular features on Al Bowlly - one of Britain's favourite vocalists. Published quarterly and attractively printed and presented, each edition includes exclusive articles by a team of world-class writers and journalists plus Picture Pages, CD and Cassette reviews, Readers letters, discographical features and the advertisements that you will want to read. A *"must"* for 78 RPM collectors. 3 First Class stamps (or 3 IRCs) will bring a sample copy and full details.

Vintage Record Mart, 'Sarsden', Lower Common, Aylburton, Nr. Lydney, Gloucestershire GL15 6DR, UK

This is a 32 page quarterly trading magazine for collectors of 78s. Annual subscriptions are UK £8, Europe £10.40, USA & Canada £12.20, Australia and New Zealand £12.80.

International Tony Bennett Appreciation Society, c/o Mark Fox, 15 Kilpin Hill Lane, Staincliffe, West Yorkshire, WF13 4BG, UK (phone: 01924 401909, e-mail: markfoxtbas@hotmail.com).

The Doris Day Society, 31 Kirkfield Rise, Ambleside, Cumbria LA22 9DX, UK

The Deanna Durbin Society, c/o Denis Holland, 84A Wolverhampton Rd., Stafford ST17 4AW, UK (phone: 01785 213987).

Dick Haymes Society, c/o Roger L. Dooner, 2951 Tyler St., NE Minneapolis, MN 55418, USA, or Maurice Dunn, 16 Cradley Park Road, Netherton, Dudley West Midlands, DY2 9SR, UK

(web site: http://www.dickhaymes.com/dhsociety/index.html)

International Al Jolson Society, c/o John Wehrman, 1195 Hickory Hill Drive, Green Bay, WI 54304, USA (e-mail: JWWehrman@aol.com - web site: http://www.jolson.org/ - see also http://www.mikescaife.btinternet.co.uk/ for Mike Scaife's Scottish branch and his excellent Great Song Stylists website)

Frankie Laine International Appreciation Society, c/o Tony Cooper, 18 Napier Crescent, Seamer, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 4HY, UK (phone / fax 01723 863022 - email: tony@flias.com , website: www.btinternet.com/~flias/)

Sinatra Music Society - Mrs Pat Harvey, National Secretary, 11 Mossbank Avenue, Burntwood, Staffordshire WS7 4UN, UK (tel: 01543-317743,
website: www.sinatra-ms.com/Sinatra.html)
Sinatra Music Society, Dublin Branch, c/o Chris Hitchcock, 21 Roselawn Walk, Dublin 15, Ireland (phone: 01 8212418)

International Andy Williams Appreciation Society, P. O. Box 5, Westerham, Kent TN16 1UE, UK

The club has been running since 1967 and membership costs £6.50 (UK), £7.50 (Europe) and $15 (USA). A quarterly newsletter is issued.

Books 'n' Bing

1. Natural Selection

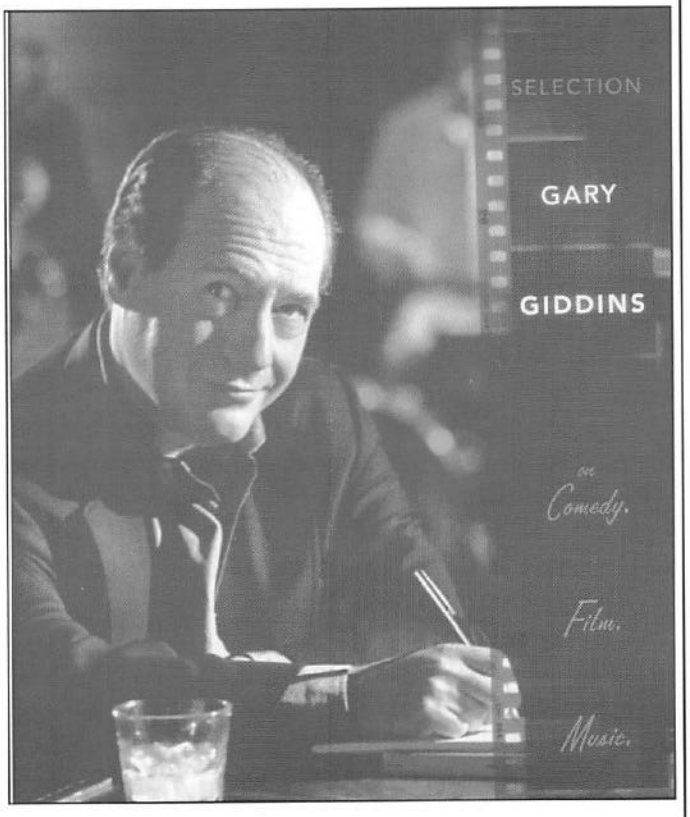
By Gary Giddins, published by Oxford University Press in the USA. ISBN: 13: 9780195179514, 432 pages, hardback.

Bing biographer Gary Giddins' latest book, *Natural Selection*, an anthology of his essays and reviews from *The New York Times, The Village Voice, The New York Sun, The Perfect Vision,* and various other publications, brims with subjects that will likely be of interest to fans of Bing and his contemporaries. It's an enthralling read that's both entertaining and intellectually enriching—not only the pieces that cover his main area of expertise, Jazz, for which he is justly renowned; but also for the enticing spectrum of cultural categories he taps, both highbrow and mainstream, with which he is every bit as comfortable and knowledgeable.

I was absorbed from the moment I picked it up, first skipping among the chapters that cover subjects of primary interest to me, then branching out into less familiar territory. Both routes were enjoyable and illuminating. While providing fresh, thought-provoking perspectives on some of the artists, films, and writings with which I was already familiar, *Selection* has inspired me to pull down from the shelf a few books, DVDs, and CDs I haven't perused in awhile—and to search out and explore some of those that I never have.

Besides critical analyses and appreciations of

luminaries of the Jazz world (Bing, Fats Waller, Glenn Miller, Cole Porter, Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Paul Whiteman, Count Basie, B.B. King, Billie Holiday, et al.), *Natural Selection* encompasses a surprising (though maybe not so surprising if you're familiar with Giddins' equally eclectic *Faces In the Crowd*) range of subjects, which includes comics Chaplin, Keaton, Lloyd, the Marx Brothers, Jack Benny (the lone holdover from *Faces*, with updated footnotes), Bob Hope, and Jerry Lewis; Thomas Edison and the Invention of the Movies; directors Fritz Lang, William Wyler, Jean Renoir, Martin Scorsese, and Robert Bresson; pioneering special effects wizard Ray Harryhausen (the animator behind the cyclops and the fire-breathing dragon in *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad*, which co-starred Kathryn Crosby); horror films, films noir, Vitaphone and Looney Tunes shorts; actors Brando, Garbo, Lon Chaney (Sr.), and Steve McQueen; singer-actors Doris Day and Sammy Davis Jr.; films *Children of Paradise, Nightmare Alley, La Dolce Vita, and The Big Red One*; folk music archivist Alan Lomax; writers Norman Mailer, Saul Bellow, and Moss Hart. Even Bob Dylan is included in the mix, as well as many others. Mr. Giddins is well versed in each of these subjects, and his usual level of painstaking research is evident in every paragraph, while he displays that rarest of writers' gifts: authoritativeness without arrogance.



Giddins gives greatness its due in his overviews of consensus geniuses: Ellington, Armstrong, Holiday, Dylan (Mr. G was the only contributor to *Studio A: The Bob Dylan Reader* who chose to write about Dylan's singing), Bresson, Brando, and the prophetic Lang (I now desperately want to see his *Spies*) among them. He boldly says of Buster Keaton's masterwork, *The General*, "As an evocation of American History, it is the equal of [D.W.] Griffith or [John] Ford." But he also throws us a few curves, proffering a surprising intercession on behalf of Jerry Lewis, for example, which he leads off with a possible explanation—by way of Aldous Huxley and Edgar Alan Poe, no less—for the mystifying infatuation the French have with the Nutty Patsy. Giddins argues convincingly for a reassessment of Lewis' films, but Jerry doesn't escape unscathed, as Giddins claims that the comic's ambition to be in a perpetual state of Holden Caulfield is partly responsible for "the infantilization of a culture that produces film stars like Tom Cruise, Leonardo DiCaprio, and Tobey Maguire, none of whom could have succeeded in the box office polls of the 1930s and 1940s any more than Tracy, Bogart, and Robinson could today."

He urges a fresh look at the oversimplified and undervalued Doris Day, who "survived more than three generations of leading men, representing three generations of style and/or beefcake; most of them quickly faded while she marched cheerfully onward . . . the only female band singer to achieve movie-musical superstardom; and the only major star of movie musicals, female or otherwise, to survive their passing and win even greater popularity in comedies . . ."

Bob Hope also receives a salute from Giddins, both in a review of the *Bob Hope Tribute Collection* DVD releases—in which he critiques the first four *Road* films (he gives them a collective thumbs up, acknowledging Bing's contribution, of course)—and an affectionate remembrance of Bob on the occasion of his passing.

Bing connoisseurs will be pleased to note that Mr. Giddins' glowing review of last year's Lincoln Center retrospective ("What a Swell Party This Is! A Salute to Bing Crosby") from the *New York Sun* is included in *Selection*. It was featured in a recent issue of *BING* magazine, and it's good that it is now reaching a wider audience. *BING* readers will recall Giddins' enthusiastic coverage of the 14 Crosby films shown at the weeklong event, and the special praise he bestowed on *Going My Way*, calling it "a neglected masterpiece". "The Crosby-Fitzgerald relationship has lost nothing to time, and Bing's performance is astonishing—convincing, appealing, and original", he persuades. (The film's Best Director Oscar winner, Leo McCarey, doesn't fare so well in Giddins' review, in another chapter, of his ill-conceived final effort, *Satan Never Sleeps*.)

There are a few less-than-complimentary musings: the 1992 Tina Sinatra-produced miniseries on her father receives a deserved drubbing, and *Ancient Evenings*, Norman Mailer's "windbreaking novel" is . . . well, you get the idea. There's also a fascinating discussion of lip-synching, covering many of its practitioners, from Al Jolson to Ashlee Simpson.

All of which adds to the colorful tapestry that is this can't-put-it-down kind of book, one that you'll want to

keep on your nightstand for rereading favorite chapters long after you've finished it.

In his appraisal of Chaplin and Keaton DVD releases, Giddins says of Buster's fleeting (only 46-minute) *Sherlock Jr.*, "its length is mandated by its content and not the reverse." Though most of the word counts were no doubt predetermined to one degree or another by available magazine or newspaper space, the above statement nevertheless applies to each of the separate entities which makes up *Natural Selection*— Giddins eloquently yet efficiently tells us much in amazingly few well-chosen words, and makes it fun to boot.

Jon Oye

(Editor: Many thanks, Jon, for an excellent review. It may be of interest to members to know that Gary Giddins now has his own web site at www.garygiddins.com)

2. Gloria Jean: A Little Bit of Heaven

by Scott MacGillivray and Jan MacGillivray. Published by iUniverse. 331pp. $22.95 pb.

The book's front cover describes this as "her authorized biography". That's good and bad. The good implies that biographical material not normally available to scissors and paste merchants has been placed at the disposal of the writer. The downside is that the biographer pays the price of being authorised by having to be discrete when he stumbles upon unfavourable doings. And when the subject of an authorised biography is still alive you can expect to discover nothing that discredits him or her.

What's so special about Gloria Jean anyhow? David Quinlan's book about film stars tells us she was kept at Universal as a minor-league Deanna Durbin. Halliwell's "Who's Who" more or less echoes this, calling her a second-feature rival to D.D. Only Ephraim Katz in his reliable International Film Encyclopedia builds on her Deanna Durbin connection when he tells us that Gloria Jean never achieved the latter's popularity and that she "fared poorly when she later attempted a transition to adult roles."

Before reading the book I tried to recall any of her films other than *If I Had My Way* (1940). Only *Never Give a Sucker an Even Break* (1941) and *Copacabana* (1947) came to mind and my reason for seeing those two in the first place was because W.C. Fields was in the first one and Groucho Marx in the second. And neither of those comedians was on top form, both having passed their peak. If you want to build up a home film library of Gloria Jean performances you will have to settle for just those three movies. *Sucker* and *Copacabana* are available not because of Gloria Jean's presence but because there is a strong following for anything featuring Fields and Marx. In the case of *Copacabana*, a DVD is available from several sources. This is because the film's copyright was not renewed and the film is now in the public domain. One source even offers a colourised print. As for *If I Had My Way*, this will be available on DVD by the time you are reading this.

Gloria Jean appeared in over two dozen films between 1939 and 1961. If I mention that some of her other films in addition to the above trio were *Get Hep to Love* (1942), *Reckless Age* (1944) and *There's a Girl in My Heart* (1950) you'll begin to understand why there is little demand for home videos of her work.

Which means there could only be one reason why I bought "A Little Bit of Heaven" (the title of her first film, by the way). It was to discover something about the filming of her second film, *If I Had My Way*, and her views on working with Bing. The book devotes a full chapter, comprising six pages, on her work on *If I Had My Way*. She calls the film "a near perfect example of an old fashioned, feel-good, whistle-the-tunes-as-you-exit movie". From the book we learn the professional tips Bing gave her: they stayed with her for her subsequent career on film. The relationship between Bing and director David Butler is explored (they had fights). Through the book's joint biographers, she recounts the personal advice given to her by Bing. There is a revelation about the skin disease they both suffered by working together so closely.

Bing and Gloria Jean at work on If I Had My Way

Of interest to me was an explanation for the disparity in the film's running times between its premiere as clocked in the "films on television" books at 93 or 94 minutes, the 90 minutes logged in Fred Reynolds's "The Road to Hollywood" and the meagre 82 minutes quoted in Halliwell's Film Guide. For the film's 1946 re-issue Universal wanted to capitalise on Bing's ongoing popularity as a Paramount star. They promoted their title by emphasising Crosby as the film's sole star. The book reproduces the film's publicity from both 1940 and 1946. By the time of the re-issue Gloria Jean's contract with Universal had expired and her name on the poster is smaller than that of third billed Charles Winninger. Missing from the revival print was Gloria Jean's only song solo in the film, "Little Grey Home in the West". She also recollects singing some verses of "Pessimistic Character" which were definitely missing from the print shown on BBC television on three occasions in the 1980s. As for the 82 minute version, this seems to be the 1950 print released by Realart. When Universal Pictures merged with International Pictures they made part of their library available to Realart. That company was not into film production. Before the Hollywood studios had measured the insatiable appetite for anything celluloid, Realart would put together re-issue packages and make them available to exhibitors for a flat rate. These re-issue presentations offered a double bill of previous hits and films were often trimmed to fit a three hour programme. What did survive the editing processes were Gloria Jean's two vocals involving Bing: "Meet the Sun Halfway" and "I Haven't Time to be a Millionaire". She guested twice on Bing's Kraft Music Hall programme and it is surprising that she was not given the opportunity to duet with him. As those programmes immediately preceded and then followed the production of *If I Had My Way* it strikes me that a good promotional opportunity was missed.

That's about it really to allow you to decide if you want to buy the book to read about Bing. Because of the non-availability of over 90% of Gloria Jean's films the authors devote many paragraphs to outlining the plots of her movies. These make for tedious reading. In the main her personal life is bypassed in the book. We are told that Mel Tormé proposed to her after they appeared together in the 1944 film *Pardon My Rhythm* but otherwise her life offscreen concentrates on her years away from showbusiness when her screen appearances more or less came to a halt in the 1950s. The book also contains a full filmography as well as a listing of every song she delivered on film. Finally, there is a complete discography listing her four 78 releases on American Decca from 1939 and 1940.

Keith Parkinson

(Editor: Thanks, Keith. Regarding the missing footage from If I had My Way, *Gary Giddins has been searching for this for some years as it contains acts by legendary vaudeville stars and, according to Gary, getting them on film was the key reason Bing and David Butler wanted to make the picture in the first place. Gary understands that Universal still has a pristine negative but they were proposing to charge too much to make a print. However, as we went to press, Universal was in the process of issuing a 94 minute version of the film on DVD and let's hope it contains the missing footage. See Keeping Track for further details.)*

The Hidden Art Of Bing Crosby

In BING #142, we mentioned a new book by Clive James called "The Meaning Of Recognition: New Essays 2001-2005". One of the essays is about Bing and was written in 2003 when the BBC Radio 3-part series was about to be broadcast. Clive James is an excellent writer as you will now read in this extract.

From its bare billing in *Radio Times, Bing, the Greatest of Them All* doesn't sound like the kind of event that might win gangsta rap fans away from their alleged interest in gun crime. But for anyone who has ever wondered how a simple-seeming song lyric can invade the mind with such poetic force, here is some essential listening. Going to air in three parts on BBC Radio 2, the series manages to raise most of the issues about what happens when a superficially ordinary, non-operatic voice shapes and guides the words of a song so that they get into your head and stick there. The most niggling issue of all is raised by the choice of presenter. In the enforced absence of the actual Bing, his story is told by Pat Boone. It would be fair to say that Boone himself is by now heading for the last round-up, yet his voice still sounds young. It always did. When he was on top of the hit parade half a century ago, his voice spelt unspoiled youth. It was pure and pretty: far prettier than Bing's. So what did Bing's voice actually do, if it couldn't do the whole job just by itself?

The answer is that a popular singer's voice should have a lot more going for it than just its quality. Too much natural beauty, indeed, can get in the way, flooding the aural reception system of the listener before the actual song gets a chance to register. Pat Boone was lucky with his biggest hit. "Friendly Persuasion": the archaic diction ("Thee I love") injected some aural roughage into his usual effect of squirting the audience with perfume. Leaving even Boone sounding rugged was Johnny Mathis, who made angelically soaring journeys up the charts in the fifties with the kind of big ballad that enabled him to show off his effortlessly gorgeous upper register. . . By the time I was old enough to be in control of the Bakelite knobs on our lounge-room radio in Sydney, Bing, across the Pacific in Los Angeles, was getting into his next to final phase. After more than twenty years of averaging three movies and forty records a year on top of a radio show every week, he was finally slowing down enough to look like the lazy

son-of-a-gun he had always cannily pretended to be. But I didn't have to do much research to find out what he had that the newer fellows hadn't: or, rather, what they had that he wasn't burdened with. They were doing it the pretty way. He was just doing it, although "just" is a word we will need to dismantle with care.

"I have just an ordinary voice," he said in one of his carefully uninformative interviews. "Anyone who can carry a tune thinks he can sing as good as I do." His use of the word "good" for "well" is a tip-off that his gift for the common touch could sometimes lapse into the common lunge. Sinatra was a more typical band singer in having no book-learning to speak of, or with. In high school Crosby learned elocution from the Jesuits. He went on to a college education. He was so at home with a twelve-cylinder vocabulary that his radio and film writers later poured on the polysyllables in full confidence that he could handle anything. But he was saying exactly what he meant when he said he had an ordinary voice. He could do extraordinary things with it, but regarded as a mere sound it was just the noise of a nice man speaking. He put most of his art into making sure that he still sounded like that even when he was performing prodigies. The secret of great success in the popular arts is to bring the punters in on the event, and you can't do that if you are manifestly doing something they can't do. You have to be doing something they can do, so that they can dream. It's just that you do it better, so that they can admire. Essentially they are admiring themselves: it's a circuit, and too much obvious bravura will break it.

Bing had the bravura, but except in his early days it wasn't obvious. Starting his career in the 1920s, he was the man on the spot when the microphones got good enough to be canoodled with, as if they had hair to be stroked. Released from the necessity to project, he could concentrate on shaping a sung note so that it sounded like speech. Other singers were slower to catch on, and some of them never caught on at all. In any film musical starring Dick Powell you can hear - and what is almost worse, see - what happened to a singer when, even if miming to playback, he continued to project as if he weren't being amplified. He looked as if his vocal cords hurt like piles. Bing went in the other direction, as if the microphone could hear him think. In this endeavour, he was lucky with the natural attributes of his voice. Often characterized as a pleasant light baritone, it had a tenor top to it, conferring the precious gift of allowing him to relax into the upper register. A singer can have a note-perfect two and a half octave range and no flexibility at all. What counts is the capacity to negotiate the tricky intervals, and Bing could do an instantaneous octave jump that left the second note ringing as clear and open as the first.

Admirers of the cornet player Bix Beiderbecke would describe the resonating clarity of his attack as bullets hitting a bell. Bing could do what Bix did and often did it with him. They were both in Paul Whiteman's huge jazz band. Often derided in retrospect by purists as a lumbering rip-off of the black man's heritage, the Whiteman organization had some funkier components than its name taken literally might suggest. An outfit within the outfit was called the Paul Whiteman Rhythm Boys. Singing sprightly tongue-twisters with the Rhythm Boys, Bing proved that he could string notes together like Bix playing a triple-tongued glissando. "There Ain't No Sweet Man Worth the Salt of My Tears" was supposed to be a woman's song but Bing turned it into an athletic event. Sometimes he and Beiderbecke performed together, like two instruments, or two voices, vying for supremacy. Bing showed that he could smear a note without blurring it. He could make it dip in the middle like a Chinese vowel, and it would still sound as if it had been spoken. These were prodigious amounts of know-how for a crooner to have, and they were the real secret behind the later success in which he seemed to repudiate them. You have to have it before you can throw it away.

Later on, Bing was as careful not to attract attention with his technique as a hired assassin is with his luggage. He attracted attention to the song, and there he was lucky in his timing, because the American song was in the full flight of its creative energy, still establishing the repertoire whose presence does most to explain the absence of a considerable modern American opera. . .

Every inflection Sinatra sang came from the spoken language. By no paradox, he did the same for screen dialogue. His sense of the music inherent in speech - not the music that can be imposed on it, but the music already in it - made him a revolutionary screen actor. Alas, he was too impatient to become the screen giant he might have been. (In the recording studio he would volunteer for another take: in the film studio never.) Crosby in his screen heyday was number one box office star in the world five years running. Sinatra would have thought that was a stretch in prison. It was one of the

differences between them, and you could see all the differences in *High Society,* one of the great cinematic experiences of my first youth. For *High Society* I moved into the cinema and stayed there, as if constant attendance would get me an audience with Grace Kelly.

In *High Society,* Bing, old enough to be her grandfather, and Sinatra, merely old enough to be her father, vie for Grace Kelly's blessing. Frank got close, but the matter was settled in Bing's favour after he and the spun-gold goddess sang 'True Love' together. A song so undemanding that even I could sing it, "True Love" was constructed by Cole Porter especially for the movie after it was noticed that Kelly could not manage three notes in a row unless two of them were the same and the third not very different. For the standard romantic ballad, "True Love" was a symbolic indulgence so overwhelming that it invited rebellion, like the rumours about Marie-Antoinette's necklace. Sinatra had been doing his best for years to divert the traditional repertoire in the direction of actual passion, rather than well-behaved self-control. Bing stood for adulthood, with all its renunciations. Sinatra stood for adultery. He could sing "One For My Baby" with a whole heart. When, in "Love and Marriage", he sang that they went together like a horse and carriage, you could tell he thought that the sentiment was a natural product of the horse. Bing, always a great one for the ladies until his second marriage settled him down (I prefer to leave out his off-screen success with Grace Kelly: the matter is still too painful), would probably have agreed with Sinatra on the subject but would never have let himself be caught uttering a non-conformist nuance. Sinatra's problem was that nuances were as far as he could go. In the world of the well-made song, illicit love, no matter how delicious, was a crime, and the compulsion to sing about it was the punishment. The standard song catalogue was a thousand modulations on the theme of anguish. Rock and roll was the shout of guiltless joy.

Clive James

Uncle Everett

Carolyn Schneider takes a look at another of her relatives and this time it's Everett Crosby.

Considered outspoken, blunt, and even brusque, my uncle Ev was actually gentle, kind, and of good humor with his family and friends. Yet his booming voice, impressive physical appearance, and take charge attitude resulted in most people showing him a great deal of respect.

I recall visiting him many times at the Crosby Building on Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood. While Bing's office was fairly small, Everett's was the only suite in the complex, which he maintained until the late 1950's. I suppose that as Bing's agent and business manager, the single prestigious office space was given to Ev in order for him to meet with important people in the industry. He kept a small brass plaque, on his extra large desk that read **"BIG DEALS ONLY".**

The Crosby offices were a beehive of activity as you can imagine, especially at the height of Bing's career. However, when lunchtime rolled around, the wheels of the Crosby machine came to a halt, and everyone went out to eat, except the switchboard operator, Magee. A. favorite nearby restaurant was "Bit of Sweden" where the Crosby secretaries gathered. When uncle Ev would stop in, and see the girls from the office, he would send the waiter to their table with a round of drinks, compliments of Bing.

Uncle Ev was devoted to Florence, his second wife. So much so, that in an effort to boost her operatic career goals, he arranged a European singing tour for her. Uncle Larry was appalled to learn that the gowns Ev told his wife to buy for the trip cost more than what Florence was being paid for her appearances. Definitely not one of Ev's money making deals, no one had the courage to tell Bing. And it was a good thing too that uncle Bing wasn't around the day Florence came in the Crosby offices and brought her pet monkey. She parked him right next to poor Magee who was trying to juggle a multitude of phone calls and had no time for monkeyshines.

May 9, 1939. Everett Crosby (forty-two) marries Florence George (twenty-three) and they leave for New York and a European honeymoon. Film director Victor Schertzinger is best man.

In his youth, uncle Ev served in the military and was stationed in France. During that time he developed a taste for things European, such as fine wine and gourmet foods. He loved every form of beauty and became a connoisseur of art, literature and antiques. As a result, going to visit him years later when he had filled his house with imported treasures, it was always a genuine treat for me. Aunt Florence agreed wholeheartedly with his choices and enjoyed being the hostess at their lavish parties. This was not Uncle Bing's style at all but it suited Ev and Florence to a tee.

Their home was the most elaborate of anyone's in the family. It was filled with antiques and fancy furniture, and I recall feeling a bit intimidated when I first entered. Always the gracious hosts, even to me as a ten year old, it wasn't long before mother and I were made comfortable with conversation and laughter. Everett's daughter from his first marriage, Mary Sue, was six years older than myself and would take me off to her room for some girl talk.

Usually we were invited to uncle Ev's for dinner, and mother would give me a refresher course on table manners. Also, how I should put portions of food on my plate when the butler came around with a tray of green beans and silver servers. I was in training for quite some time.

When mother would tell Uncle Bing that we were going to Everett's, he'd say something like, "don't forget to wear your evening gown, you know how they are."

Everett visits his brother on the set of Road To Rio.

I believe it was about 1958 when Uncle Bing was told that his brother had diabetes. The news was a terrible blow to all of us, and there was even talk that Ev might retire if his illness became incapacitating. Could Bing get along without him? All through the years, Everett had been the power behind the Crosby throne. The question was soon to be answered, when uncle Ev begin to walk with a limp. His dreaded disease first attacked his feet and toes, due to lack of circulation. Having accomplished his goal of making Bing a multi-media star, it seemed to be an appropriate time for change. The days of "big deals" were over.

In 1959 Florence and Ev sold their beautiful estate on Bellagio Road and moved to a rural area in Rockland County, New York, to the surprise of our family. The couple planned to raise a special breed of Angus cattle. Everett would be a gentleman rancher, but I'm not sure what role Florence, the opera singer, was expected to play. It seemed like an episode from TV's *Green Acres*.

After a brief experience with the cattle, they decided to concentrate on raising Arabian horses instead, at their Fair Acres Farm in Connecticut.

Their idyllic life lasted until 1963, when uncle Ev had to have his leg amputated, a result of the blood flow problems caused by his diabetes. None of our family had knowledge or experience regarding this disease, and when Uncle Bing called the siblings to relate the news, everyone was shocked. My mother was in tears.

Everett, on the other hand, handled the situation with his usual aplomb. Stating that he had met a war veteran at the hospital who had hooks for hands, Ev said "he's a lot worse off than I." While waiting to be fitted with an artificial limb, my uncle would travel around the farm in an electric golf cart, supervising the activities and barking orders.

Uncle Bing called his ailing brother regularly and even kept in contact with his doctors, fearing that Everett's morale and fighting spirit might be dampened. By this time uncle Ev was denied the pleasure of good living that he enjoyed for so many years, the food, wine and cigars were forbidden by the doctors. Undaunted, he substituted those treats by staying busy at the farm with the horses, pets and flower raising.

A year later, 1964, Ev suffered the amputation of his remaining leg. After his long recovery period, Bing and Kathryn visited him at the farm. It was to be the last time Bing, and the brother who set him on the road to fame, would see each other.

Another incredible physical hardship came to Uncle Everett the following year, 1965, which proved to be the final, crushing blow. The human body can withstand only so much, but do we truly know the limit of the human spirit? This time Ev was diagnosed with throat cancer, yet he never complained and even joked about the chemotherapy leaving him whiskerless, so he didn't have to shave anymore.

In July, 1966, at age 70, Uncle Ev left Fair Acres and was buried in near-by Lakeville, Connecticut. Aunt Florence was at his side every day during the five years

it took for diabetes and cancer to strike down her husband. Uncle Bing sent his sister, Catherine, (my aunt Kay) to represent the family at the funeral. Bing paid all of her expenses and she stayed with Florence for a few days.

This bear of a man with a gentle soul accepted his fate without anger or regret. Although our family was well aware of his business acumen, I would say that we underestimated his courage and ability to handle the "biggest deal" of his life. Apparently Uncle Bing recognized his brother's wisdom, strength, and depth of character early on, because he put Everett in charge of his career, back in 1930.

Carolyn Schneider

(Editor: Carolyn has been busy with book signings in recent months and we noticed a nice article in the ELKO Daily Free Press of 19th July and we'll share some of this with you.)

Bing and Me: Crooner's niece makes Elko visit

By CAROL PETRIE - Free Press Correspondent

ELKO — Local residents turned out in droves last Thursday at the Elko Senior Center to meet with Carolyn Schneider, niece of the late, great Bing Crosby. With the crooner's songs playing in the background, Schneider visited with attendees, listened to their stories and looked over the memorabilia they had brought in to share with her. Schneider was in town for a week-long promotional tour of a self-published book on her relationship with her uncle from childhood through motherhood, and beyond. The book, titled "Me and Uncle Bing," was a collaboration between Schneider and local author Lin Anderson. "I wrote pages and pages of information and memories down on big, yellow legal pads and Lin put them into chronological order and turned the material into the book that I have today," said Schneider.

The book covers Crosby's rise to stardom from an insider's view and includes numerous family photographs. The book also recounts his time spent living in Elko where he owned and operated more than six local ranches.

"I spent a few summers at Uncle Bing's ranch, the PX," said Schneider, adding, "He loved the time he spent at his ranches and the Elko community. He always said he could come here and be just one of the guys."

Schneider and her husband Dirk drove out to the PX where she took a few photos at the entrance to the ranch where she has so many fond memories of her time spent with her famous uncle. "I'd love to be able to come back and tour the ranch some day. It'd be a real treat for me," she said. In addition to holding a book-signing at the Northeastern Nevada Museum where Schneider has donated the bulk of the memorabilia for the Crosby display, she also spent countless hours searching through the museum's archives for new information on her uncle's time in the community.

"I learned from an Elko Daily Free Press article that he kicked off the Silver State Stampede in 1948 ... at the speaker's stand he was quoted as saying, 'Let 'er buck!'" The coincidence that Schneider was in Elko promoting her book on the 58th anniversary of her uncle's appearance at the Stampede was not lost on her. She said, "I think it's wonderful! It's like it was meant to be."

Schneider loves to hear stories of Crosby and is always available to look at photos and other memorabilia anyone would like to share. "I was really excited to come to the senior center. The people here today are the age group that knew who he was, and many actually either met him or personally knew him. I hope to glean some new memories and stories of my uncle today. Anything anyone wants to share, I'd love to hear it." Much to Schneider's delight, long-time Elko resident Echo VanDerDussen shared an original 8x10 black and white photo of Crosby taken at Anacabe's Elko General Merchandise with then manager Frank Anacabe, VanDerDussen, and fellow employee Omelia Hernandez. "Mr. Crosby came into the store and after George C. Harrison sold him a new hat, he graciously allowed us to take a picture with him," VanDerDussen said.

Another wonderful bit of memorabilia was brought in by Beverly Neff, who had three record albums of Crosby's recorded under the Decca label, which included the hits "I Can't Escape From You," "Mr. Crosby and Mr. Mercer," "I'm An Old Cowhand," "Adeste Fidelis," "Silent Night, Holy Night," and "Small Fry."

"This has been just a wonderful experience for me," said Schneider, adding, "I look forward to many more visits to this wonderful community my uncle called home. I know there are still more stories of the impact he had on the lives of the people in this area and I am anxious to hear each and every one. I'd like to thank everyone for their wonderful western hospitality during our stay here."

Carol Petrie

(Editor: Well done, Carolyn. Great publicity for Bing.)

Celluloid Crosby

The film had a budget of $3million. It was Paramount's most expensive film to date. It was the most musical of Crosby musicals based on its song count. Its worldwide rentals exceeded $9million on its initial release. In North America alone it took $5.7million. It was filmed towards the end of 1945 and was premiered in several cinemas in the U.S.A. on October 16th, 1946. The date was significant. Philco Radio Time made its debut on the ABC network that same evening and the publicity for both film and radio fed off each other. A reminder that the film was in theatres was provided by *Life* magazine which featured Bing and leading lady Joan Caulfield on its cover on the week the film was premiered. The New York premiere took place at the studio's East coast showcase, the Paramount Theatre. The film was *Blue Skies* and as such it seems surprising that the New York showing was bolstered by a stage show featuring Stan Kenton and his orchestra, the Nat "King" Cole trio and a couple of acts whose names mean little sixty years on: Dean Murphy and the Lane Brothers. It was third placed at the U.S.A. box-office in 1946 and made the box-office top ten in the U.K. the following year. It was the U.K. Odeon cinema circuit's top draw of 1947. It has been a "Celluloid Crosby" article before but this time around I thought I would look at production and personality issues.

The production of *Blue Skies* was firmed up during the winter of 1944. Paramount assigned Mark Sandrich to direct. He'd made the studio a handsome profit with his earlier Crosby film, *Holiday Inn* (1942). Both Bing and Fred Astaire got on well with him in that earlier movie although at that stage it was Paul Draper, not Fred, who was cast as Jed Potter. Draper must have had some clout because he objected to sharing the dance sequences with Joan Caulfield. The basis for attempting to change his dance partner was simple: she could not dance. Draper was a choreographer and knew what he was talking about. Caulfield's limitations were already apparent to Mark Sandrich. He had been impressed with her screen presence in her debut film, *Miss Susie Slagle's*. Prior to seeing the rushes of *Miss Susie Slagle's* Sandrich had Marjorie Reynolds in mind for the Mary O'Dare role. Reynolds was under personal contract to Sandrich. On screen she had been a more than adequate leading lady for Bing on their earlier Paramount films *Holiday Inn* (1942) and *Dixie* (1943). When she learned that she was not in the running for a part in *Blue Skies* she felt she could safely direct her displeasure towards Bing. She said, "I don't know what it was but when we did *Holiday Inn* and *Dixie* he was always rather cool and distant."

After Sandrich saw Joan Caulfield in the as yet unreleased *Miss Susie Slagle's* he went on to offer her the part of Mary O'Dare in *Blue Skies* after she had assured him she could dance. Many people think they can dance but few can reach a standard that will thrill cinema audiences. Sandrich told Caulfield that her idea of dancing was not his but agreed that if she took dancing lessons at her own expense the part of Mary O'Dare would be held open for her. Then, some four months before shooting of *Blue Skies* began, Mark Sandrich died. Draper seized the opportunity of being able to audition a replacement for Caulfield, wrongly thinking that following the death of Sandrich support for her employment on *Blue Skies* was out of the way. Draper had the backing of producer Sol C. Siegel who was also in favour of dumping Caulfield. Both were unaware of the studio clout held by another Caulfield champion waiting in the wings. Bing had been taken in by Joan Caulfield's charms.

Bing dances with Joan Caulfield

In April of 1945 Stuart Heisler was announced as director following the death of Sandrich with Irving Berlin having a say in the new appointment. It was

realised early on that Paul Draper was primarily a dancer. Draper's acting skills came in a distant second. A press release from Paramount followed stating that Draper was "too inexperienced filmwise" for the part. And so the role of Jed Potter went to Fred Astaire. Coincidentally, Fred's co-star from his RKO days, Ginger Rogers, was originally considered for the part that went to Joan Caulfield. Miss Caulfield filled in some of the detail regarding Draper's replacement:

"We had a week of production and scenes weren't flowing, and that's putting it mildly. Draper had a speech difficulty. So one afternoon Bing said, 'I think that'll be about it.' He excused himself, went to the front office, and the next thing I know, Fred Astaire was going to be on the set on Monday morning. And he was."

Is it too speculative to state that Draper didn't want Caulfield and that Bing saw an opportunity of securing her presence in the film by replacing him with Astaire? It certainly improved the box-office potential of *Blue Skies.*

Before exploring the Crosby/Caulfield relationship it is worth examining her career prior to *Blue Skies.* She was born Beatrice Joan Caulfield in New Jersey in 1922. She was undoubtedly attractive and was modelling whilst still a teenager. That led to ingénue roles on Broadway. A Paramount talent scout saw her on stage and liked what he saw. The studio signed her to a contract and *Miss Susie Slagle's* followed. That film was released after her appearances in *Duffy's Tavern* and *Blue Skies.* It was about nursing students in Baltimore during the early part of the 20th century. Joan Caulfield was second billed to Veronica Lake, one of Paramount's major female contractees. The two ladies did not enjoy each others company as subsequent events would prove. "Halliwell's Film Guide" refers to *Miss Susie Slagle's* as a "modest melodramatic potboiler".

When the second part of Gary Giddins' biography of Bing appears I will immediately turn to the index to see what he has to tell us about Joan Caulfield. Gary will provide the facts. In the meantime we will have to settle for the only "on the record" comment of a romance between Bing and Joan Caulfield. It was in 1988 that Patricia Neal revealed in print what had been rumoured over the previous forty years. Patricia Neal had started a relationship with one of Bing's close showbusiness friends, Gary Cooper, when the two were making *The Fountainhead* in 1948. Caulfield knew of the Neal's secret affair with the married Cooper and confided in Patricia Neal that she was similarly involved with Bing. Apart from that reference from Patricia Neal's 1988 autobiography, titled "As I Am", it is necessary to clutch at straws in order to draw conclusions and find credible clues about Joan Caulfield's friendship with Bing. Here are a few such:

One month before *Blue Skies* started filming she played opposite Bing in the radio adaptation of the movie "Sing You Sinners". Broadcast on July 5th 1945 it was a Lux Radio Theatre presentation with Joan Caulfield taking the part played by Ellen Drew in the 1938 film. Surely Bing approved of the substitution.

Four months after the completion of *Blue Skies* she commenced filming *Welcome Stranger.* She was Bing's leading lady in that film. She was the only one of Bing's leading ladies of the 1940s that appeared in two consecutive films. Paramount allowed Bing to approve his major co-stars.

In 1948 she co-starred for a second time with Veronica Lake. The film was *The Sainted Sisters.* The two feuded throughout production. Shortly after completion of filming Lake's star dressing room was assigned to Caulfield. Studio speculation said it was Crosby's clout that resulted in Lake's eviction.

We have established Joan Caulfield's terpsichorean limitations. How was her vocalising? The film's vocal tracks were laid down in July of 1945. She appears early on in the film singing "Serenade to an Old Fashioned Girl". She also briefly soloes "Blue Skies". Her duet with Bing on "All by Myself" has been issued on limited circulation vinyl and CD soundtrack albums so you can judge her talents without having to watch the film. It may be significant that when *Welcome Stranger* swung into production a few months after *Blue Skies* was released she was still Bing's leading lady but without singing opportunities in that one.

After having a star stuck on her dressing room door Joan Caulfield worked out her Paramount contract with four more films for the studio. *Larceny* (1948), *Dear Wife* (1950), *The Petty Girl* (1950) and *The Lady Says No* (1951) are long forgotten. This magazine's readers probably know her only for *Blue Skies* and her presence in two all-star cast Paramount productions in which Bing also appeared. Those films were *Duffy's Tavern* (1945) and *Variety Girl* (1947). Her first retirement from the big screen coincided with her marriage to producer Frank Ross in 1950. She only made one film during their ten year marriage. That was *The Rains of Ranchipur* in 1955. Following her divorce she became popular in a couple of television series - "My Favourite Husband" and "Sally". A second film career began in the 1960s when she started to appear in westerns, a genre new to her. *Cattle King* (1963), *Red Tomahawk* (1967) and *Buckskin* (1968) were all from that decade. Her last feature film appearance was in *Pony Express Rider* (1976). When she was not on the big or small screen she was active in summer theatre productions. Joan Caulfield died in 1991. Before returning to *Blue Skies* I offer a quote from Ephraim Katz. One sentence in her entry for his film encyclopaedia summarises her half century as an entertainer perfectly. He writes about her "radiating delicate femininity and demure beauty but rarely much else."

Back to *Blue Skies.* Although *Life* magazine devoted a cover to Crosby and Caulfield its reviewer was cool towards it. He wrote: "Should be a much better movie

than it is. The characters have meaningless things to say to each other and senseless situations to get in and out of." On the other hand, the aim of *Film Daily* was to advise film renters what to book to please audiences. Its recommendation was based on "a great deal of laudable attention to detail, entertainment values and intelligent story construction". It was several decades later that *Time Out* magazine provided a fairly balanced view, although Bing did come in second to Fred in performance terms. Film critic Tom Milne wrote: "Negligible backstage plot, but the numbers are fine (even if Crosby does groan his tiresomely soulful way through 'White Christmas' *and* 'How Deep is the Ocean)... High spot is undoubtedly Astaire's great interpretation of 'Puttin' on the Ritz.'"

That *Blue Skies* was regarded as something extra special in the U.K. can be determined by the re-opening of two cinemas that were casualties of war time bombing. The Ritz cinema in Birkenhead was opened as 'the showplace of the North' in 1937. On December 21st, 1940, it was hit by a bomb. This jewel in the crown of the independent circuit S.M. Super Cinemas Limited reopened on January 13th, 1947. Movietone News was there to film the event. The band of the 22nd (Cheshire) Regiment played. A variety billed topped by Billy Cotton and his band provided live entertainment. The film presentation was *Blue Skies*. In April, 1944, the Roxy cinema in the Springbourne area of Bournemouth was destroyed by an incendiary bomb. It remained in a ruined state for six years until a post-war building licence could be obtained. It re-opened on March 9th, 1950 with *Blue Skies*. Before television and video, good films had a long theatrical life. *Blue Skies* was a crowd puller long after its initial release.

Keith Parkinson

THE A-Z OF BING'S MOVIES

RUBY, HARRY [Harry Rubinstein] (1895-1974) Composer and lyricist. Although Bing recorded a few of Ruby's compositions he only featured one in a film. That was "Three Little Words" which the Rhythm Boys recorded for use in *Check and Double Check* (1930). Musicians lip-synch to the Rhythm Boys recording in the film. The song became the title of a 1950 film about Ruby and Bert Kalmar, the co-writer of "Three Little Words". Another of Ruby's claims to fame is his work on three Marx Brothers comedies in their early years at Paramount.

RUGGLES, CHARLES (1886-1970) Character actor usual cast as a timid, disarming type. His role as the "Reverend" Dr. Moon in the 1936 version of *Anything Goes* was not a typical Charlie Ruggles part. He was public enemy number one at the film's commencement, only to be relegated to number 1313 as the picture closed. He joined Bing in singing "You're the Top" when the two shared a cell on board ship. Two other links with Crosby films are his brief appearances in *The Big Broadcast of 1936* (1935) and the wartime short *The Shining Future* (1944). Ruggles was in films from 1915 *(Peer Gynt)*. His appearances in *Charley's Aunt* in 1930 and *Ruggles of Red Gap* five years later endeared him to picturegoers. Just about every film in which he appeared made use of his light comedy skills and it is fitting that in the 1960s he worked for Disney in several family movies. His brother was the director Wesley Ruggles.

Charles Ruggles (right) and Bing are visited in their cell by Ethel Merman in Anything Goes.

RUGGLES, WESLEY (1889-1972) Director. He directed Bing in *College Humor* in 1933 and produced and directed *Sing You Sinners* some five years later. He entered films as a Keystone Kop in 1914 and three years later moved behind the camera as director. The subsequent thirty years resulted in his directing few memorable movies. You could say that his two Crosby films were typical. In 1946 he visited the U.K. to produce and direct *London Town* (aka *My Heart Goes Crazy* in the U.S.A). He also provided the plot for that film. There was speculation that Bing would appear in it. Fortunately nothing came of that. The film was a massive flop and Ruggles vowed never to work in pictures again. He took early retirement from showbusiness. His brother was the actor Charles Ruggles.

RUMAN, SIG [Siegfried Albon Rumann] (1884-1967) Character actor. Once you have seen Sig Ruman in a film you find it impossible to envisage anyone else playing the role. He spent just enough time on screen in three Crosby pictures to make an impression doing what he did best. That was portraying a flustered foreigner, pompous and excitable. In *White Christmas* (1954) he was a landlord and in *Robin and the 7 Hoods* (1964) he played Hammacher. But it is as Dr. Zweiback in *Emperor Waltz* (1948) that he made his first appearance in a Bing film. That was at a time in his career when he seemed to move from one shooting stage to another with barely a pause. He was instantly recognisable by then for two memorable screen outings. He played a flustered Russian diplomat in *Ninotchka* (1939) and Concentration Camp

Erhardt in *To Be or Not to Be* (1942). Both were comedy roles made all the funnier because Ruman played them as Sig Ruman rather than for laughs. His last comedy role was in *The Fortune Cookie*, released the year before he died.

Sig Ruman (right) as Dr. Zweiback tries to take the puppies from Bing in Emperor Waltz.

RUSH, BARBARA (1927-) Actress. She played Marian, who confounded all earlier audience predictions in *Robin and the 7 Hoods* (1964) by ending the film as Bing's (Allen A. Dale's) companion. By the time she made that film she was a seasoned performer, having made her first film in 1950. The fifties were her decade and she proved she could act when she was cast in serious dramas such as *Bigger Than Life* (1956) and *The Young Lions* (1958). When she made *Robin* she was finding it harder to land parts that used her acting talents. *Can't Stop the Music* (1980) was typical of the way her big screen career had dipped but by then she was well established as an actress in made-for-tv films and series.

RUSSELL, JANE [Ernestine Jane Geraldine Russell] (1921-) Actress. She was Bob Hope's leading lady in *Son of Paleface* (1952) in which Bing made a brief appearance (via the use of footage from *Just For You*). Immediately after that film, it was her turn to make a brief appearance with the boys. That was for *Road to Bali* (1953) where Hope played a flute and made her appear from a basket. The picture then closed as she joined Dorothy Lamour and Bing walked off with both ladies. She made her screen debut in *The Outlaw* (1943). It was not a great western but it did good business because of the publicity generated by producer Howard Hughes when he announced he had devised a bra for her to contain her ample bust. The film was much talked about but little seen for seven years. Then Hughes re-released it and schoolboys could finally find out what all the fuss was about. Groucho joked about it being *A Sale of Two Titties*. Jane Russell's contract with Hughes meant she was little seen on screen until the 1950s. By then she was cast more for her figure than her acting talent with *The French Line* (1954) and *Underwater!* (1955) being typical glamour parts. Later on, when the glamour began to fade, she took on roles as a mature woman of the world. *Born Losers* (1967) and *Darker Than Amber* (1970) both showed off her acting ability. Her autobiography and subsequent television interviews highlighted her sense of humour.

RUSSIAN LULLABY Song. An Irving Berlin composition featured in *Blue Skies* (1946). It was part of a medley which Bing sang offscreen in a montage sequence which illustrated the nightclub venues at which he had performed. Bing did not make a studio recording of the song.

RUTTENBERG, JOSEPH (1899-1983) Director of photography. By the time he came to work on *Man on Fire* (1957), Ruttenberg had already made a name for himself on some of M-G-M's major colour productions such as *Brigadoon* (1954) and *Kismet* (1955). This made it a surprise to find him working in black and white on his one film featuring Bing. In fact, the following year M-G-M assigned him to *Gigi* for which his cinematography earned him an Oscar. And his penultimate work was on *The Oscar* (1966). By then he had been in work as a photographer for over fifty years, having been a newsreel cameraman for Fox in 1915. He picked up three Academy Awards before his statuette for *Gigi*. Most of his work was at M-G-M and that studio must have been pleased when he received Oscars for *The Great Waltz* (1938), *Mrs. Miniver* (1942) and *Somebody up There Likes Me* (1956), all Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer productions. His final work was on *Speedway* (1968), one of those forgettable Elvis Presley pictures from the 1960s.

SAILOR BEWARE Song. It was a number written especially for Bing to sing in *Anything Goes* (1936) by Leo Robin and Richard Whiting. Bing sings it elegantly attired in top hat and tails.

ST. JAMES INFIRMARY Song. Bing sings a parody of this Joe Primrose composition in *Birth of the Blues* (1941). An early scene finds Bing in a pool room. With Jack Teagarden accompanying him on trombone he sings a few lines about going to jailhouse to the tune of "St. James Infirmary".

ST. LOUIS BLUES Song. Also featured in *Birth of the Blues*. Bing commences to sing "St. Louis Blues" before being overcome with emotion. The song is finished by soprano Ruby Elzy. Bing made a classic recording of the song with the Duke Ellington Orchestra in 1932.

SALKOW, SIDNEY (1909-2000) Director. For a few months before he directed his first film - *Four Days' Wonder* (1937) - Sidney Salkow put his toe in the door of Hollywood by working as a writer. Thus he worked on the screenplay of *Rhythm on the Range* (1936) with Walter DeLeon, Francis Martin and John C. Moffitt. Seeing the film now, it's hard to envisage why Mervin J. Houser's somewhat basic story required four writers to turn it into a screenplay. However, it provided an intro to directorial work for Salkow, the job that earned him a living for the next thirty years. Little stands out in the dozens of mainly 'B' pictures that he churned out at the rate of five or six a year when he was working flat out. No doubt such fare as *Woman Doctor* (1939), *Sword of*

the Avenger (1948) and *The Quick Gun* (1964) could fill the bottom of a double bill in neighbourhood cinemas but most of his work isn't even up to playing on television in the early hours of the morning.

SANDE, WALTER (1906-1971) Actor. In *Anything Goes* (1956) the character played by Phil Harris is placed under arrest by Walter Sande, playing officer of the law Alex Todd. It was not a typical Sande role. He was usually cast as a heavy on the other side of the law, like in *Bad Day at Black Rock*, the film he made just before *Anything Goes.* He appeared in dozens of film from the late 1930s onward without making much of a screen impact.

SANDRICH, MARK (1900-1945) Producer and director. His contribution to Bing's film career was brief but significant. He produced and directed *Holiday Inn* (1942) and *Here Come the WAVES* (1944). Had he lived he would have gone on to *Blue Skies* (1946). He entered films in his early twenties as a propman before graduating to comedy shorts, one of which won an Oscar in 1932. He proved adept at turning out money-making Astaire musicals for RKO. Paramount enticed him by allowing him to produce and direct. He had actually commenced working on *Blue Skies* when he died, leaving Stuart Heisler to finish the film and take directorial credit.

SANTA LUCIA Song. In a scene towards the end of *The Emperor Waltz* (1948) a couple of dogs cause Bing to punt across a lake with Joan Fontaine as passenger. No doubt with thoughts of gondoliers performing similar functions Bing sings a snatch of the Neapolitan classic "Santa Lucia". Lanza or Pavarotti would do the song justice with a full concert version but Bing wisely limits himself to a couple of lines.

SAWYER, JOSEPH [Joseph Sauer] (1906-1982) Comedy actor. In *College Humor* (1933) one of the students of Professor Danvers (played by Bing), is ridiculed by fellow students. The ribbing is about football rather than academic skills. It is Jack Oakie who is on the receiving end of Joseph Sawyer's jibes. *College Humor* was probably Sawyer's film debut. He was seventh billed as Joseph Sauer. He went on to make a name for himself as the first character actor a casting director would try to enlist where a tough cop or bullying army sergeant was called for. See him in *Sergeant York* (1941) or *About Face* (1942) to learn how he keeps soldiers in line. His presence on the big screen diminished when he became a regular cast member in the television series "Rin Tin Tin" beginning in 1955.

SAY IT ISN'T SO Song. An Irving Berlin song deleted from the release print of *Blue Skies* (1946). The Crosby soundtrack recording was unofficially issued some thirty years later and Bing make a studio recording of the song in March, 1968 for issue by the Longines Symphonette Society.

SAY IT WITH MUSIC Ill fated project that could have been Bing's Hollywood musical swansong. We can chart its course for most of the 1960s:

1963. The idea was born. M-G-M producer Arthur Freed, best known for the musical *Singin' in the Rain*, discussed the project with Irving Berlin and a budget of $9 million was considered appropriate for a large scale musical. The scope had to be broad because Freed envisaged a musical biography of Berlin. The only difficulty was finding an acceptable script which would allow the interpolation of Berlin songs. On March 3rd Berlin was present at an award dinner at which Frank Sinatra sang a medley of Berlin songs. Sinatra was being touted as the star of the film and M-G-M were confident enough to offer one million dollars for the rights to Berlin's compositions to be used in the picture. Berlin agreed to write ten new songs and assign twenty-five of his existing hits. On April 30th M-G-M initiated a press release. Vincent Minnelli would direct Sinatra and Judy Garland and a premiere sometime the following year was projected. Bing headed a roster of singers to help out the two leading players with the Berlin vocals. The guests tentatively committed to the film included Ethel Merman, Fred Astaire, Pat Boone, Bobby Darin, Johnny Mathis and Connie Francis. Not surprisingly, the budget was now upped to $15 million. To strengthen the story on which the songs would be hung, writer Arthur Laurents was engaged. In September, Berlin told the London press, "*Say it with Music* is still on." He did not know at that stage that Laurents' script would not impress him. The finished screenplay was delivered to M-G-M in November. It was about an international minstrel and Berlin said "no" even though the international theme was matched to an appropriately extended cast. It included Sophia Loren (Italy), Julie Andrews (Britain), Brigette Bardot (France) and Ann-Margret (Sweden).

1964. Not surprisingly, the story was farmed out to another writer. This was Leonard Gershe, who visualised Fred Astaire functioning "as a kind of Greek chorus." Producer Freed said "no" this time and brought along his long time collaborators Betty Comden and Adolph Green. They went back to basics and examined the Berlin phenomenon. They suggested three separate stories set in 1911, 1925 and 1965.

1966. Two years later that script was rejected, even though Comden and Green received $150,000 for their troubles. Writer George Wells was brought in.

1967. M-G-M handed the role of producer-director to Blake Edwards. As he was married to Julie Andrews it was easy to predict his choice of leading lady. Filming was set to commence in September of the following year.

1968. M-G-M changed hands and Kerk Kerkorian, its new owner, conferred with James Aubrey, its new president. They cancelled the film on the grounds that Berlin was a musical has-been and they were therefore unwilling to risk $15 million of studio money. But Irving got his million dollars.

Keith Parkinson

Bing In Germany

Our enthusiastic member Dieter Beier of Nuremberg in Germany has been researching an interview he recalled seeing on the ZDF channel many years ago and his hard work has produced dividends. He discovered that Bing was interviewed by Margret Dunser at his Hillsborough home in 1975 and that this was shown as part of the V.I.P. Schaukel programme on ZDF on January 2, 1976. He has managed to obtain a copy of the programme on DVD and Bing's interview runs for just over 7 minutes and concludes with him singing a few bars of 'Auf Wiedersehen, My Dear'. Fascinating to watch, although

Bing's voice is obscured by the German translation for most of the time.

Dieter also managed to track down Margret Dunser's book *High Life* (Kindler, 1979, Munich). He has kindly translated the extract which deals with Margret's meeting with Bing and we have great pleasure in reproducing this.

Going to San Francisco

It was evening as we were driving from Reno to San Francisco. At the airport in San Francisco, it was announced that flights to Los Angeles were overbooked. There was no possibility to fly back until the next morning. We are to stay overnight in 'Frisco. It is all right with me. I try to think of some additional work I can do while we are there. I will try to telephone Bing Crosby in the morning. I had interviewed him some years ago but the interview could not be televised, because the film material was unusable. Light falls in on putting in the film, old film material or a mistake on film development. In such cases everybody accuses the other one.

Bing Crosby's mansion - a twenty six room house at Hillsborough, in the midst of a pine park belonging to it - sits exactly on a rounded hilltop of earth that an earlier earthquake pushed up. After breakfast, I phone his private number. Crosby's factotum is on the telephone. Previously butler to the Duke of Windsor, he exchanged the polished English way for the casual manners of Crosby's household. Only his accent stayed British.

"Mister Crosby is expected in a quarter of hour from golfing."

I look out of the window. It is raining lightly. The clouds are so low you can almost touch them. Typical of nasty weather days in San Francisco. I can't imagine ever playing golf on such a day. One hour later, I stand with my camera team outside Bing Crosby's home, a villa that could compete with any English Duke's palace with its several metre-high gate. At the entrance to the house, a life-size portrait of the singer in "Steirer" dress and "Tiroler" hat. Bing Crosby must have had a liking for Austria. With "GruB Gott, tritt ein" ("Welcome and enter") Bing steps up to me, essaying some dancetaps just like a frolicsome lad. He looks sun-tanned and very well. Two years ago, he had an operation to remove some of his lung. I complete his welcome "bring Gluck herein" ("bring luck into this house"). He speaks some German words. His second wife (thirty years younger), Kathryn Grant has a good command of our language. Bing Crosby was married first to actress Dixie Lee. She died in 1952 from cancer. There are four children of the first marriage. The three children from his present marriage are all out of home this morning. Harry - his oldest son - is playing golf, Nathaniel - the youngest - is at a film matinee in the hope of obtaining signatures of various film stars. For the last year he has been a passionate collector of autographs. Mary Frances, who has been having ballet lessons since her childhood, has just managed to get plane tickets to Mexico City, where she will study expressive dance on the advice of Margot Fonteyn - a housefriend of the Crosby's.

"Darling," sounds the voice of his wife from upstairs, "I'll be right down and we'll have a cup of tea."

With that the discussion about the children's occupations is ended. In the library, a totally yellow room, the book covers reflect some very intelligent reading. Crosby was educated at a Jesuits' college. He studied law and worked in a lawyer's office. Two or three times a week and on Sunday he played as a drummer in cafes and sometimes at school events; so he became a hot star in the band. Soon he earned more money than the lawyer by whom he was employed. His smooth baritone voice, a light tremolo and his talent for rhythm, which enabled him to sing songs from Rudolf Frimmel to patriotic tunes, European operetta, gospel, jazz and blues. He could really sing anything.

This talent made him the Bing Crosby, whom the public adores. No other record in the world has sold as much as "White Christmas".

Talking about his many pictures, in which he appeared without any acting training, he said, "I was simply playing myself."

Bing and Margret take the air together.

The musical *High Society* with Grace Kelly and Frank Sinatra was a huge hit all about the world. It was the last film Grace Kelly acted in, before she became Princess of Monaco. He talks about plans for the future. Couldn't we make a telecast together? A show in

Europe? I hesitate knowing that he is a shrewd businessman. Not without good reasons he got to be a multi-millionaire. But he says: "Money is unimportant. It would make me happy." He fetches his new LP, which he recorded with Fred Astaire in London, and some books, which were written about him. In one of these biographies he scribbles a dedication. I didn't read it until I got home. He had written: "On to new acts! So long. Don't forget old Bing Crosby."

He stands up; "Before lunch I usually have a walk. The grounds are beautiful just after the rain." Ten minutes later he is back, wearing his blue trousers and the white-blue striped jacket, a green lambskin-lined coat and one of his dented little hats, which are his signature mark. The blue and green tones of his clothing clash. He has long been known for his extraordinary colour combinations. For instance, on one date he wore one blue sock and one brown sock. His showbiz colleagues often tell the craziest stories about Bing Crosby's motley taste. I speak about this with him during our walk through his 16000 square metre park. No answer.

The woods smell of pine resin. The seventy-two year-old singer bends down to a pine cone, treading down with his shoe some poisoned fungus. Suddenly he goes on: "I'll tell you a secret. I'm colour blind." He breaks up two branches as walking sticks. Without pausing he says: "To get old is not too dreadful. But if I look back at the fifty years of my career, it was all a lot of fun. Simply fantastic." He sends the branch swizzing through the air like a sword. "Sometimes my breathing gives me difficulties. But it's not too aggravating, if you think about the alternative. This - I believe - Maurice Chevalier said some years before his death."

Bing speaking to Margret on the verandah of his home.

Bing Crosby made these remarks about twelve months before he died. I can still see him in front of me as he showed me beneath bushes hidden dug-outs, which he had set up for birds and forest animals, and in which he hid sometimes, if he wanted to be alone.

I never saw him again after this meeting. Our plan to film in all European cities - landmarks of his life - his most famous songs, was never completed. We spoke on the telephone sometimes - the last time as he was at one of his golf tournaments in Europe. I have a memento that I preserve on a glass bowl at my rarity board. After lunch we had talked on the sheltered verandah of his house until the late afternoon. In the corner stood a basket containing golf balls. I had left my handbag placed on a leather stool in the lounge. Bing Crosby went for the handbag and gave it to me together with a parcel of records and books. We were late on the way to airport. The aeroplane took off and reached its flying height. I searched in my bag for a mirror and my make-up and I found one of Crosby's golf balls. A joke? A remembrance. Beside his name in my address book, I have made a cross. When I am phoning, my eye falls on these crosses and the remembrance is there again. I think about the people who have passed on. I believe in the human soul or a ghost or what ever it is. And I believe too, that any positive and negative thought about the dead person are received by them in some way. I know this is childish imagination.

Margret Dunser

Bing's British Hits 1945-48

John Kobylecky has been doing some original research.

There can be little that has been written or published about the life, times and career of Bing Crosby which is not already well known by the members of the ICC. So this fact has greatly coloured the nature of this article, which hopes to look at elements of the career of the great man which have not been covered before. The official British charts did not start until 1952 whilst his peak years for chart hits were in the 1930s and 1940s. We know very little about how successful Bing's records were in the UK prior to 1952.

I have been looking at the period from 1945 as part of my ongoing researches to try to determine what might have been the top 100 selling singles of each of the decades of the second half of the 20th Century, and the 1940s, and – perhaps – the 1930s. Something of this research has been included in this article, which aims to give the musical landscape of each of the years under consideration, and where Bing Crosby himself fitted within this definition. That musical landscape draws heavily on the sheet music charts of the day, using the Music Publishers Association lists. (From 1935 they put

together the acknowledged official weekly sheet music sales chart, though they didn't always publish it for public consumption.) This is for three reasons.

1) Record charts did not exist, so one has to work with what one has.

2) Sheet music generally outsold shellac at this time, so was undoubtedly of prime importance in the music market, and

3) When disc charts did at last appear (in 1952) it was clear that there was a strong correlation between the two markets, albeit stopping somewhat short of an absolute mirror image. Beyond that, what follows is a game almost anyone can play.

A game almost anyone can play? Well, this article is a matter of drawing together different strands of information from a variety of different sources, and indulging in informed guesswork. We can all do that, and on the subject of how well a certain record of the time might have sold, try to remember how difficult or easy it was to find it in the second hand shops the last time you went shopping for a 78. Chances are, if a certain personal favourite proves an impossible find, it probably never made it into the shops in any kind of number in the first place. I have taken a 3:2 ratio of sheet music sales to record sales as a useful guide.

At this time, it has to be remembered that 100,000 copies was a very good sale for a record in the U.K. True, there were million selling records in the U.S.A., but not here. In 1945, approximately 28-30 million records were sold in this country. This was a marked improvement on the 21-22 million sale of the last non-war year (1938) but it was only as recently as 1943 that the Decca combine was able to report its first end-of-year profit in over a decade, and sales were still subdued. War, it has to be admitted, was still a better thing for an industry where the matter of supply of the raw material was the major limiting factor, and the gradual rise in sales reflected the previous experiences of the First World War.....13 million records sold in 1913, 20 million records sold in 1918.

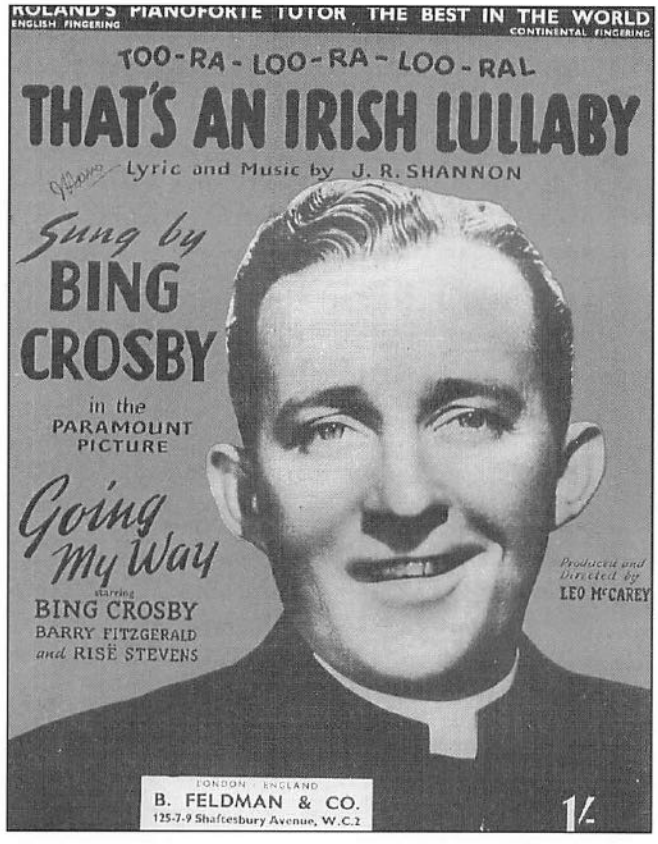
That we are reduced to the measures previously outlined to estimate record sales has much to do with an event in 1980 when the Decca Record company was taken over by a rival firm, whose virtual first act was to promptly dump the complete archive of written material it had just bought. This lost treasure trove of fifty years' musical heritage included an era during the depression when this country was reduced to just two record producing companies. The other – EMI – has proved less destructive with its past sales records, although for practical purposes they have to be treated as having gone the same way as the Decca lists when conducting research. Those interested in finding out will meet an obstruction that is tantamount to state secrets under guard. National codes to nuclear weaponry are less well guarded than (say) the numbers of how many copies Jo Stafford actually sold on DB 2983!

But, let's look at the years one by one.

1945

Bing and the Andrews Sisters' version of "Don't Fence Me In" joined the Top Ten in the Sheet Music Sales charts during May, finally left it in October, and was a No.1 during July This strong signature song from the popular film *Hollywood Canteen* offers the most persuasive argument for the biggest hit of the year for Bing Crosby. This assumes he got the better of eight competing versions and achieved sales of over 200,000 copies, where both targets were eminently gettable. More to the point, he was also backed by the ever popular Andrews Sisters, and the other side boasted "The Three Caballeros" from the hit cartoon.

Apart from the aforementioned, Bing would have had a hit early in the year with "(Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral) That's An Irish Lullaby", backed with "Let Me Love You Tonight" on Brunswick 03554. Made popular by the film *Going My Way* 'Lullaby' was very long-lived in the charts, and stayed from October '44 through to September '45. Crosby's version was heavily predated by Joe Loss, who was afforded no less than four months totally unopposed on the shelves–a license almost unheard of, at this time. Then, no sooner was 03554 released, and Bing had to contend with Anne Shelton. Even so, I suspect that his rendition ultimately won-out, albeit with final sales totals somewhat compromised.



Bing's next hit also had much to do with its feature on the silver screen, and *Here Come The Waves* gave the British public its first taste of "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate The Positive." Bing was backed on this by the Andrews Sisters, and 03569 also boasted "There's A Fella Waitin' In Poughkeepsie" on the reverse. Like 03554, release

was somewhat delayed, and before June Bing was not to be found amongst the six competing versions. Of these, the undoubted success was by Geraldo & His Orchestra, accompanied by Three Boys & A Girl. (Parlophone F2069). Crosby's eventual release was one of yet another three competitors, and there were still more to follow. Methinks that the British public came to rather over-dose on "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate", for the sheet music stayed but two months in the top ten, spending one week at number one, and there was an exhaustive choice of record to be had. Bing undoubtedly caught the slip-stream of this success – his record first appeared on June 1st: the title departed the top twelve on June 8th – but probably sold only 20% of what he should have. Given the depth of his popularity however, his version may well have eventually proved to be the best selling of all the eleven on offer.

Bing released "More And More/I Promise You" (Brunswick 03581) in July. The former had received a lot of airplay in the spring, whilst the latter had also been featured in the aforesaid film *Here Come The Waves*. As before it took a long wait to apply for the Crosby platter, and those not prepared to do so had five competing versions to choose from in April, and another three in May. The sheet music charts somewhat reflected this state of affairs, and "More" came in April, was gone by August.

Two songs from the film *The Three Caballeros* appeared in October (Brunswick 03587), "Baia/You Belong To My Heart." The latter was a top ten sheet music chart hit in July, although had apparently been hanging around for some months before reaching this high. Two discs issued in 1944 vied for what early sales were to be had, and Carroll Gibbons and Charles Wolcott came in the high summer, to battle it out for optimum sales. Incidentally, the Wolcott disc was issued on Brunswick (03578). Now tell me. What was it that Wolcott had, which Bing did not?

The release of "Just A Pray'r Away/A Friend Of Yours" (03589) in September would have been interesting because this would have brought the "old groaner" into head to head contact with the newly improved Dorothy Squires (F2080). As ever, Bing gave the opposition a useful head start before finally finding his way onto the shelves, but at least on this occasion, the sheet music was still well placed in the charts (No.2) when he made his entrance, and there is considerable evidence to suggest a continuing sale up until Christmas. However, "Out Of This World/June Comes Around Every Year" did not appear until November on Brunswick 03596, and the film that had spawned them had been out since....well.....June!

1946

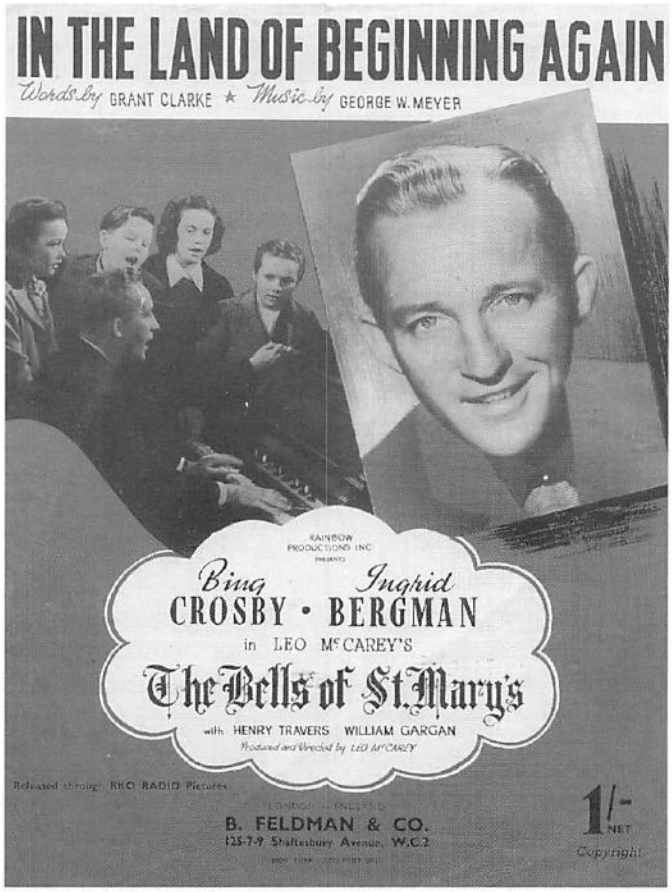
The sheet music charts for 1946 as a whole can be easily summarised as the story of three hits, "Cruising Down The River", "Chickery Chick", and "Bless You." As for Bing, January heralded numbers from the latest Road film (*Utopia*) 03603 and 03604 plus a duet with Judy Garland 03597. None of the six numbers made any impression whatsoever on the sheet music charts, so let us hope that Bing's records at least out-sold the paper versions. "We'll Gather Lilacs/Beautiful Love" (03633) similarly bombed, while "Strange Music/I Love You" (03647) also disappeared without much trace.

For a time in February, the song "It's Been A Long, Long Time" traded places at the top with "Cruising Down The River" as both songs registered strong sales. Then, "Time" proved unable to stand the pace to slip out of the top ten of the sheet music charts by April. As to record sales, the man on the street quickly cottoned-on that if you turned over the Rita Williams version on Regal Zonophone (MR 3771) you had "Time" in addition to the aforementioned "Cruising." Bearing in mind that these songs were already being put out on the cheapest label – you got cash back in your hand from 2/6d – it didn't take an Einstein to work out the advantages inherent in this piece of shellac. Bing allowed good time for the market to settle when releasing his competing version (03618) two months after the fact.

In May, Bing's recording of "I Can't Begin To Tell You" hit the streets. This was a very strong single for Bing, and may have proved his best seller in 1946.

Backed by "Symphony" – a top twenty sheet music charts hit in Nov/Dec '45 – this May release was nicely timed to gain maximum advantage of a solid top three hit, ruling the sheet music charts from April into September. As ever, the opposition (three of them) got their releases in first, but the woman (Elsie Carlisle) who first brought the song to the attention of the nation with her 10th March broadcast was never to become available on shellac.

Something of the dynamics of the song "Bless You" were probably at work with "In The Land Of Beginning Again" which was the feature song from the film *The Bells Of St. Mary's*. As ever, Bing gave the opposition some two months head-start, but his profile with this number was so all-encompassing, he – surely – had to outperform sales of the sheet music with his platter (03636). For good measure another song from the film was on the reverse ("Aren't You Glad You're You?") and one way or another, both songs were permanent fixtures of the sheet music charts from May to December, with a high at number one.


IN THE LAND OF BEGINNING AGAIN
Words by GRANT CLARKE ★ Music by GEORGE W. MEYER
RAINBOW PRODUCTIONS INC
Bing Crosby • Ingrid Bergman
in LEO McCAREY'S
The Bells of St. Mary's
with HENRY TRAVERS WILLIAM GARGAN
Produced and Directed by LEO McCAREY
Released through RKO RADIO Pictures
B. FELDMAN & CO.
125-7-9 Shaftesbury Avenue, W.C.2
1/- NET
Copyright

The old groaner was also successful with other issues in the summer, which took a firm, conservative, tried and trusted approach. The ever dependable Andrews Sisters backed him on "Along The Navajo Trail/Good, Good, Good" (03634) and both songs made showings in the listings during the summer months....the former peaking at No.1, and the latter at No.9. For Crosby die-hards, patience was – as ever – a virtue, and it took until July to buy his version of songs first appearing in the sheet music charts in April. "I'll Take You Home Again, Kathleen/The Bells Of St. Mary's" was a good dose of old Irish on 03635 and undoubtedly found a market. This was more so than the sheet music, where "St. Mary's" spent one lone week at No. 17. "Day By Day" proved something of a standard on 03731 (c/w "Prove It By The Things You do") but only reached a sheet music peak of No.15 for three months of trying (August through to October). Competition on "Day" was fierce. The lads had a veritable juke box battle in the West End during September as Ted Heath's version vied with Johnny Green's on the penny-induced turntables, and then there was Sinatra (DB 2224). As ever, Bing was the last of seven runners out of the traps.

In August, "Sioux City Sue" proved a rarity, and an astonishment, as Bing's issue actually predated the sheet music success. The latter found a peak at 15 in November, and Brunswick 03646 (b/w "You Sang My Love Song To Somebody Else") may well have outperformed that. No record can be found of any chart success for "My Baby Said Yes/Your Socks Don't Match" (03744), whilst the intriguing tale of Bing's last release of 1946 – "Dear Old Donegal/McNamara's Band" – deserves to be held-over until we get into the nitty-gritty of the story of 1947.

1947

The Anniversary Song (Oh! How We Danced) – Al Jolson (Brunswick 03702)

1947 is a very important year in pop music history, and Bing fans will hopefully indulge me if I allow a little more space to comment about this year. Its importance may well have occurred to people at the time living through it, but certainly rose exponentially with the benefit of hindsight. A classic case of what I am getting at here concerns the broadcasts of the fledgling Radio Luxembourg.....a station undoubtedly important at the time to aficionados taking the time and the trouble to hunt down the airwaves, but not nearly as important as it became when one thinks of its contribution to British popular music.

Part of the trouble remained the BBC, which seemed locked in some weird kind of time-warp as far as pop music was concerned. I have the analogy somewhere kicking around the brain of the First World War, trench warfare, and of out-of-date commanders unused to modern fighting equipment. Or as one strident BBC producer of 1947 put it when he came, fresh from the bunkers, and barred Dick Haymes from the premises.... "I'm not having that mike-hugger on my programme." An organisation perpetually looking for a reason to ban things was to the continuing exasperation of the dance band directors and one Harry Roy put it firmly on the line in an interview printed on 19th July when he accused the BBC of murdering his trade. In all truth 1947 was the

year when the dance band era which had ruled the music world for three decades and more, finally came to a close. And yet, BBC attitudes were not the only mindset that was at fault.

In an editorial printed during the year (although it could have just as easily been printed in any year under his stewardship) the editor of the *Melody Maker* said that he would like to set down in print, once and for all, his views on so-called sweet music – or as he often dismissed it, corn – but that his views on this subject were unprintable. Readers of the magazine may well have already gathered this....the paper having recently wasted valuable hard-to-find newsprint on a major retrospective of jazz music in the 1920s rather than mention at all the hits of the day. In practise, it was a view echoed by the band leaders themselves who preferred to play the hot, swing numbers, rather than the MOR stuff being requested. So in short, in baulking at performing any of the hits of the day, they quite literally played themselves out of a job!

It was all very weird. To look at the record and sheet music market that was in itself a manifesto on the buying punter's point of view, and to look at the *Melody Maker* and its constituent dance-band audience, was to look at two different worlds. These two halves - these opposing dichotomies - came to a head with "The Anniversary Song" and Bebop/Rebop. The editor of *Melody Maker* and his dance band cohorts would have nothing to do with "Anniversary" for whom it solidly remained beneath contempt, but were in absolute rapture about the new Bebop sound coming from the states (the forerunner to rock n' roll) and the subsequent offshoot, re-bop. Much like jazz, they were determined to force this stuff down the throats of the British public, despite repeated facial squirmings suggesting that people did not like the medicine. The *Melody Maker* sect (for that was what it increasingly looked like) refused to take the hint. They knew better. They knew what was good for you. They were determined to have you swaying to the likes of "Ol' Man Rebop" even if it meant that the dance band as a concept and a going concern died in the process. Never, in the field of British song, has so much been written so often about music enjoyed by so few.

The amazing success of the Al Jolson platter (Brunswick 03702) ought to have given them a very big hint, but the *Melody Maker* bebop/rebop campaign endured to the astonishment of many into 1950. Meanwhile, that same paper had to grudgingly acknowledge the end of year sales of 03702 of 800,000 copies. Brunswick 03702 was the beneficiary of not so much a double-whammy, or even a treble-whammy, but a quadruple-whammy. Clearly, the comparatively cheap price of records at the time was an immediate advantage, but beyond this the film *The Jolson Story* broke onto the British market in a very big way. Tantamount to a promotional video, thirty years before such things were thought of, the film exploited the kind of mass market that Crosby had fashioned during the war, and took it one stage further.

You see, the thing was for many of the twenty and thirty somethings that went out and bought records, this was the first real taste of Al Jolson in his prime and it proved something of a discovery. Meanwhile, many of the forty and fifty year-olds who could still remember the man before the war, suddenly were put into the mood to recall their youth, and also go out and buy records. In short, it was heads Al Jolson won, and tails, he couldn't lose. Brunswick 03702 proved the biggest selling record yet released in this country, beating the 626,000 of Ernest Lough back in 1926, and should have sold a million. Unfortunately, the Decca group did a "Crosby" on the disc, and delayed release until April, thus allowing Anne Shelton (Decca F8728) to clean-up virtually unopposed for three months. On sheet music, "Anniversary" was top three from February until June, spending nine weeks at No.1 in three bites.

People Will Say We're In Love/Oh! What A Beautiful Mornin' – Bing Crosby with Trudy Erwin/Sportsmen of the Glee Club (Brunswick 03708)

The British music buying public had never had it so good. Quite apart from the aforementioned glorious comeback by Al Jolson, 1947 was the summer that both *Annie Get Your Gun* and *Oklahoma* broke onto the UK market, dominating the London stage well into the following year. That meant a head to head for Messrs. Crosby and Sinatra which was most pertinently emphasised by the nature of the advertisements in the music press. It was a real toss-up who had the bigger one! Bing was probably at a disadvantage for the floating vote because his 03708 cost 4/10½ (then worth about a $1) whereas Sinatra's DB 2307 was only 3/11½d (79 cents). However, The Voice gave the Old Groaner no less than three months head start when it came to release date, and that just had to be too much to claw back. I also note that the price for the sheet music of "People" was 2/- (40 cents) where such things usually retailed at 1/- (20 cents). It was a price hike that didn't seem to unnecessarily faze the punter at the counter because "People" peaked at No.2 and remained in the listings from May until November.

Among My Souvenirs/Temptation – Bing Crosby (Brunswick 03779)

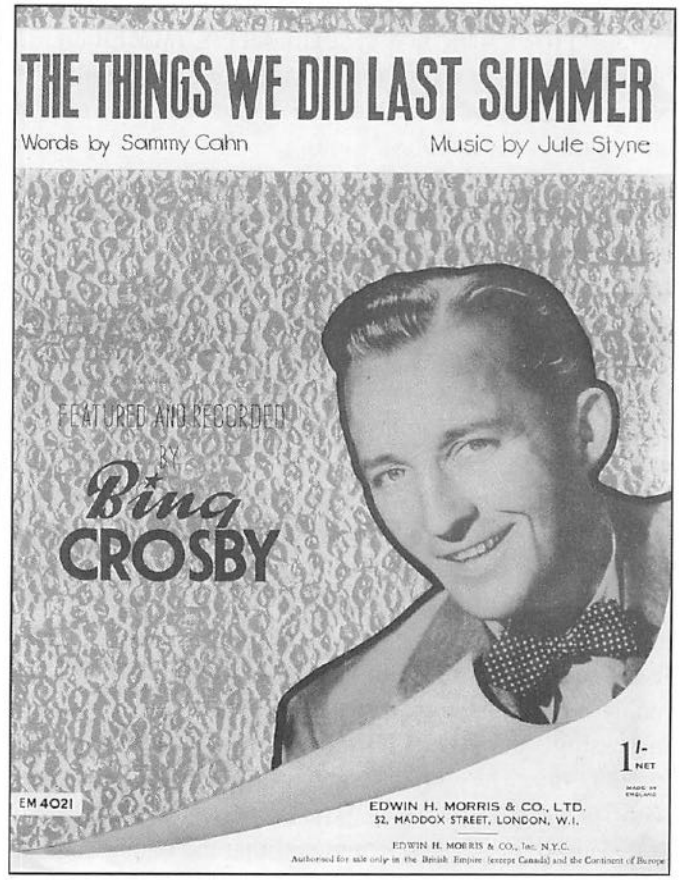
Souvenirs/September Song – Frank Sinatra (Columbia DB 2286)

Early in 1947, Crosby and Sinatra both brought out competing copies of "September Song." The number never made the charts, but it was still an appetising hors d'oeuvre of the battles to come. We will never know who won the preliminary skirmish, but in the event Sinatra's then B side (better remembered as "Among My Souvenirs") went on to render all his earlier sales meaningless. Bing fans may think it sacrilegious to

suggest that he could sing a No.1 hit song and not pass 200,000 in sales, but this is my contention with "Souvenirs," the big summer No.1, which Sinatra led through the simple expedient of a three months head start on the greater majority of his rivals, and – indeed – he even pre-dated the sheet music with his waxing. Although originally made famous by Hoagy Carmichael in the film, *The Best Years Of Our Lives*, his version was not made available here, and among the eight competitors that remained no version overwhelmed the opposition. As ever the gentleman, Bing afforded some of his rivals a generous head start before finally entering the fray, at which time he would have found it doubly galling that his sister label (Decca) filched a fair degree of potential market away, via Jimmy Miller's Squadronaires....currently topping many a popularity poll at around this time. Nor did the Chancellor of the Exchequer help, rudely shocking the punter in time for Christmas with the news that a Crosby disc would now cost you 5/4d ($1 and 7 cents).

During 1947, the Decca group seemed to employ a scatter-gun approach to Bing's releases which rolled off the presses at a rate of more than one a month. There surely had to be a limit to the spending power of even the most committed Bing Crosby fan but I suspect that nearly all of the issues banked a respectable trade, and Bing may even have sold a million – all told – this year. An interesting chart life lies behind one of Bing's 1946 releases, "Dear Old Donegal/McNamara's Band," waxed in conjunction with The Jesters on 03753. It entered the sheet music listings on 29th June, rose to No.11 the following week, and then yo-yoed for half a year before eventually reaching a high of No.6 on 29th November. At this time Bing was really coining it with that parochial Irish bit of his, so I don't doubt that he both bettered the sheet music in terms of week on week sale, and duration of sale. Here, one Josef Locke could have given him considerable grief at the cash registers, but Columbia kept us waiting until August 1948 for DB 2429.

February 1947 saw the release of "All By Myself/You Keep Coming Back Like A Song" (03672) The latter was taken from the film featuring the music of Irving Berlin, *Blue Skies* and had peaked at No.5 in the sheet music charts in October 1946. 03672 was closely followed by (of course) "Blue Skies/I've Got My Captain Working For Me Now" on 03700, but neither of these titles charted. "The Things We Did Last Summer" (03665) was a No. 8 hit in February where that dreaded F.S. gathered all the plaudits. People wanting to pay that extra shilling had to wait until April, by which time the song was heading down the charts at No.15. The reverse, "When You Make Love To Me" didn't chart.


THE THINGS WE DID LAST SUMMER
Words by Sammy Cahn
Music by Jule Styne
FEATURED AND RECORDED BY
Bing CROSBY
1/- NET
EM 4021
EDWIN H. MORRIS & CO., LTD.
52, MADDOX STREET, LONDON, W.1.
EDWIN H. MORRIS & CO., Inc. N.Y.C.

June was a good month for Bing, because quite apart from "Souvenirs" he released "A Gal In Calico/Oh, But I Do"....another good candidate for 100,000+ sales. "Calico" was well featured in the film *The Time, The Place And The Girl* and peaked at joint No.1 with "Souvenirs" on 5th July. Bing got all Irish again in time for the autumn with "Where The River Shannon Flows/Did Your Mother Come From Ireland?" (03651) and "Danny Boy/When Irish Eyes Are Smiling" (03782). By this time all four numbers were standards, and well beyond any existing chart life.

September witnessed no less than four new releases, but as with "Pretending" (03800) it was very much a matter of after the Lord Mayor's show with all of them. "Pretending" had been big in October/November 1946. One of the four – "The Spaniard That Blighted My

Life/Alexander's Ragtime Band" (03783) – did team Bing with Al Jolson, who could do no wrong in '47.

In the wake of the latter, virtually all of Bing's remaining 1947 releases were in some sort of harness. Dick Haymes and the Andrews Sisters helped with "Anything You Can Do/There's No Business Like Show Business" on 03809, and the Sisters were there again on "Go West, Young Man/Tallahassee" (03822). The Jesters and the Andrews Sisters shared the chaperoning duties on "South America, Take It Away/Feudin' And Fightin'" (03813) whilst Bing stood alone on "They Say It's Wonderful/ One Sweet Letter From You" (03794). Regarding "Wonderful," Bing was 10th out of the traps for the dozen runners of 1947, whilst nothing else in the list did much in the charts. "South America" spent a month in the top ten as '47 gave way to '48.

1948

During the 53 chart weeks between 29th January, 1948 and 27th January, 1949, four songs occupied the top spot for 51 of those weeks in the sheet music charts. "Tree In The Meadow," "Buttons And Bows" "So Tired" and "Galway Bay." "Galway Bay" itself spent five months at No.1, first arriving on April 29th. Peak sheet music weekly sales were astonishing, weighing in at 75,000. That all of this was so had everything to do with Anne Shelton. The song had been propping up the back shelves for some months, spending a couple of weeks in the listings during 1947, whilst various waxings by Denis Martin, Robert Wilson and Michael O'Higgins gathered dust. Then, in April, Anne Shelton suddenly made a feature of the song in one of her broadcasts, and the BBC were inundated by the response....a thousand letters asking her/them to play it again. This June release was the eventual response and for all practical purposes can be assumed to have sold in healthy quantities for the rest of 1948.....it was still at No.4 when the last chart of the year was published.

People clamouring the record stores in May hoping to get the Anne Shelton version would have been in for a nasty shock. There was a Decca recording ready and waiting on the shelves, and available at the popular price of 3/7½d, but it belonged to Billy Cotton & the Sentimentalists and not our Annie. Still, as luck would have it the ready availability of Bing's own recording on Brunswick 03882 (coupled with "My Girl's An Irish Girl") was a definite worthy consolation prize, although the retail price of 5/9d came as a bit of a jolt. Since the November budget, the Chancellor had introduced yet another tax hike in April as the post war austerity package really started to grip. Still, as has been noted before there was considerable mileage in "Bay" well into 1949, and seeing as Bing was never better loved then when waxing old Irish, he was surely assured quite measurable sales for a good year and more. This is my best candidate to put forward as Bing's best selling

waxing for this decade (although "White Christmas" would ultimately do better in later years) for if he couldn't score with this open-goal than he was never going to do so. That Bing and our Anne might not have ultimately passed the 500,000 mark, however, was probably due to the competition offered by....well....Bing and our Anne.

Golden Earrings/But Beautiful – Bing Crosby (Brunswick 03838)

"Golden Earrings" was made a hit through the broadcasts of Vera Lynn and Doreen Stephens. Neither lady was available on shellac, and with the sheet music still not in the shops the only option to buy in February was via Bing, Guy Lombardo & his Royal Canadians (ironically also out on the Brunswick label) and Victor Silvester. The song itself was very long lived, and spent eight weeks at No.2 in the sheet music lists whilst not finally vacating the top ten until October. Thus, Brunswick 03838 was assured measurable sales for most of the year. In the USA, Bing's version of 'Earrings' did not really register as Dinah Shore and Peggy Lee had the chart successes there.

Dance, Ballerina, Dance/Ma-Ha-Lani-Papa-Doo – Vaughn Monroe & his Orchestra (HMV BD 1208)

Vaughn Monroe was making quite a name for himself in this country at this time, and this is my best bet for the record that afforded the great British public to put some kind of monetary substance to their applause. Originally

charting on the 19th June, Monroe's July release mirrored the sudden sales hike that made this opus top three, where it remained until September. Don't discount the song on the reverse, which was aimed at the constituency currently being wowed by Felix Mendelssohn & his Hawaiian Serenaders. The close attentions of Bing & the Rhythmaires on Brunswick 03889 ultimately may have denied Monroe the 1/4 million seller he deserved.

Looking at Bing's other releases, February saw "Apalachicola/You Don't Have To Know The Language" in unison with the Andrews Sisters on Brunswick 03837 and deserved to get what protest vote there was to be had.....the BBC having earlier denied us the Sisters' stateside hit "Rum & Coca Cola" with another of those impromptu bans of theirs....when the gals performed the latter at the Palladium in '47 it brought the house down. "Now Is The Hour/Silver Threads Among The Gold" (03839) was released in February 1948 long after Gracie Fields' version had sold very, very well in 1947. The sheet music had been top of the charts until the week before Christmas, 1947 but by February it had vacated the list after a run of thirty weeks. Bing's version may well have sold circa 50,000 however, because there were two other versions of the song issued in May 48, which suggests that the tune still "had some legs" which his particular waxing may well have identified.

His recordings of "You Do/How Soon" "Lullaby/Ave Maria" and "When Day Is Done/Who's Sorry Now" didn't have a complementary listing in the sheet music charts. "The Whiffenpoof Song/Kentucky Babe" was a well remembered issue on 03902 which probably sold in some numbers despite also having an absence of chart placing, while we had to wait until 1950 for the highest chart placing of "The Kiss In Your Eyes/Friendly Mountains" (03932). Of the eleven remaining releases in the last five months of 1948, a number were oddities, some were old standards, still more were seasonal favourites aspiring to old standards, and one was "Anniversary Song/Suspense" (03967), a bizarre attempt to outdo Al Jolson, sixteen months after the fact.

In summary, the sales of Bing's records in the United Kingdom suggest that his popularity here was virtually undiminished from his peak 1940-44 period. Or in short, as Brunswick doubtless concluded when issuing more than 30 Crosby discs in November 1948, it was business as usual as far as the old groaner was concerned.

John Kobylecky

(Editor: The lack of concrete data about Bing's British sales prior to 1952 is frustrating and John would welcome <u>any</u> information about sales of records in the UK by <u>any</u> artist prior to 1952.

Surprising to note the time lag in getting Bing's records released in the UK. Whilst some delays would be due to copyright restrictions (e.g. the 'Oklahoma' songs) it was disappointing to see how other artistes were frequently given a head-start over Bing's recordings.

In the States, Bing had no less than 42 top 20 hits in the period 1945-1948 with the major successes being:

Ac-Cent-Chu-Ate The Positive (#2)
You Belong To My Heart (#3)
On The Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe (#3)
Along The Navajo Trail (#2)
It's Been A Long, Long Time (#1)
I Can't Begin To Tell You (#1)
South America, Take It Away (#2)
White Christmas (#1 – twice + #3 in 1947 & #6 in 1948)
Symphony (#3)
Sioux City Sue (#3)
Now Is The Hour (#1)

John did not cover the sales of 'White Christmas' in the UK because a proper analysis of this song needs a lot of detail, and will be dealt with in a subsequent article. However, John commented in passing that 'White Christmas' would have sold about 600,000 copies in the 1940s.

Stan White saw an advance copy of this article and he had a few thoughts about it.)

Bing's British Hits 1945-48

This is a very interesting read because it brings back those years for those of us who can remember them, with mentions of the other singers and bands from the British

Isles and America who were in the record market with Bing at that time.

I am sure that the research by John Kobylecky is as near as possible accurate, and I am grateful to him for this interesting and enjoyable trip back to my youth.

Perhaps the BBC need to be given good marks for the countless 15 and 20 minute 'Bing Sings' programmes which they broadcast every week (sometimes 3 times a week) made up of Bing's commercial recordings and announced by Michael Brook amongst others. Because Bing's Brunswick (and Columbia) 78s were kept in the catalogues, steady sales were obtained through BBC listeners ordering his songs they had heard in those broadcasts. The 'Bing Sings' programmes ran from the 1940s war years until the mid '50s after which they were revived by Radio Luxembourg for a while. Ralph Harding used to loan his 78s to Radio Luxembourg!

Ex-bandleader Jack Jackson first came on the air with his weekly BBC 'Record Round-Up' on January 10, 1948 and his Saturday shows (11pm. to midnight) invariably included Bing's latest releases. Jack always spoke well of Bing.

Stan White

One Sweet Letter From You

Members' views, opinions and comments are always welcomed and we have great pleasure in reproducing some of the letters received since the last issue

John Walton, Lincoln, UK

I've listened with great pleasure to the 'Good & Rare' CD tracks this morning, and I'm interested in the changes that took place in Bing's voice during the period covered by the recordings. It seems to me that the timbre of the voice remains more or less the same until the *Country Girl* extracts when the lower notes seem to develop a slightly more incisive quality and his tendency to 'throw the voice' at the higher notes is more pronounced. This trait, very noticeable in the *High Society* recordings, remains strong for the following fifteen or more years, modifying slightly with the excellent recording techniques available right at the end of his career.

The *Country Girl* tracks came a month or so after Bing's letter to JST observing that he was no longer singing well. I wonder if, in the light of Bing's concerns, changes were made. Did someone provide him with a different type of microphone? Did the introduction of more sophisticated EQ or vocal enhancement techniques mean Bing's higher notes could be boosted? Did Bing make adjustments in the way he sang - e.g. sometimes more quietly or closer to the mic?

To what extent did he and those responsible for his work reassess their approach?

(Editor: John is very knowledgeable about singing techniques and I take note when he picks up a point like this. We do know that Bing's health was not good around the time mentioned as he was suffering great pain from his kidney stones problems and less than a month after recording the Country Girl *tracks he underwent surgery. Stan White has always maintained that there was a change in Bing's singing around this time too and I have often thought this was due to Bing's health problems and his loss of weight. Bing himself said that he was not singing often enough to keep his voice in trim. Certainly he no longer had a weekly radio show to worry about and his recording activities were not as heavy as in years past. So was the change due to lack of singing practice and some health issues? Further expert comment would be much appreciated.)*

Keith Parkinson, Eccleston, St. Helens, UK

When Club Crosby united with the International Crosby Circle readers of BING magazine might have wondered how the publication would fare under the International Club Crosby banner. Issue 143 sums up the outcome admirably. With splendid research undertaken by Jon Oye and Martin McQuade the magazine carried original contributions that would never have emanated from the U.K. membership. Jon's article "The Ultimate Endorsement" covered a largely unexplored aspect of Crosbyana. The bonus to the article was the vivid backcover of the magazine with a montage of some of the advertisements benefitting from Bing's product endorsement. Martin found yet another source of specialist knowledge on Bing when he probed Professor Michael Hittman's Brooklyn Paramount memorabilia collection. I look to BING magazine to increase my knowledge of all things Crosby and No. 143 exceeded expectations.

I'm pleased to note that your editorial role is not neglected when you take a holiday. It's a good thing that Pat knows what to expect when she boards a plane with you.

Jon Oye, Waukegan, Illinois, USA

Finished reading the new BING a few days ago—yet another captivating issue. A standout for me was Arne Fogel's poignant recollection of his meeting with Basil Grillo and chance encounter with Ken Barnes. This is the stuff—along with Arne's remembrance, related in

issue #142, of his phone conversations with Alan Fisher and Bing himself; not to mention the fascinating experiences Howard Crosby and Carolyn Schneider have kindly shared with us—that makes the magazine so special. As Bing's life and times recede further in the rearview mirror, these very human firsthand accounts are all the more to be savored. Thanks for committing them to print for our enjoyment and for posterity.

Norman Wolfe, Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Trust this finds you not too weary from posing for pictures! I am enjoying the magazine and hope everyone appreciates the effort which obviously goes into it. I regret that you lost your digital station. Our satellite is wonderful and improving all the time both in hardware and programming. I heard, for the first time, the other day, a recording of 'Lilacs In The Rain' by Bob Crosby and his orchestra. Bob does a very nice job on the vocal even though he sings it in a dance tempo which moves it a little more rapidly than I like and faster than his brother does on the KMH version. I love that song anyway. When I visited Bob at La Jolla, he had one wall of his apartment devoted to stereo and speakers and he played some of the Bobcats stuff at full blast. The more you listen, the more you realize how underrated Eddie Miller was.

I enjoyed the debate on the fact that *The Road to the Fountain of Youth* was never made and completely agree that it is a blessing it wasn't. Keith Parkinson makes an excellent point that not only Hope and Crosby had changed but the audience had as well. I have always thought they pushed the envelope with *The Road to Hong Kong*. Old guys don't do the nutty things young guys do.

How about a contest in the magazine to determine the worst song Crosby ever sung? I don't mean the presentation; I mean the song itself (like 'Kokomo, Indiana', 'Mandy is Two', 'Poor Old Rover' etc). The prize would be a CD of Carmen Lombardo's greatest hits and the response will fill up space and prevent the need for photos of the editor!

John O'Brien, Birmingham, Alabama, USA

Here is a question that you or some other Bing historians can answer for me. I have a very vague memory as a small child of hearing Bing at one time on a broadcast of *Arthur Godfrey Time* when I was about 4 years old. This would have been in 1950. But I'm wondering if my memory might be playing tricks on me. I'm sure many readers are familiar with Arthur Godfrey's appearance on the Chesterfield Show of April 12, 1950, along with Perry Como. But I'm wondering if Bing actually did make a reciprocal appearance on Godfrey's program. If so, that show would be a wonderful historical find.

(Editor: Well, I don't know about Bing appearing on Godfrey's show which was mainly a talent show I understand but does anyone know better? Could John be thinking of the short 1951 Chesterfield promotional film 'The Fifth Freedom' which featured both Bing and Arthur briefly?)

Bing's Radio Ratings

We all know that Bing was a top star of the golden years of radio and thanks initially to Danny Goodwin and his web site DG-125 Computer Works of Lincoln, Maine (www.dg125.com), we can now look in more detail at the statistics involved. The web site has changed since this article was first drafted but the preamble on the web site used to begin:

> "What were the most popular radio programs during the golden age? This was a question the networks and sponsors also wanted to know. They would get that answer with a ratings system. Beginning with the 1930-1931 radio season, the popularity of all network radio programs was monitored by a ratings system. As to who cranked up the numbers, there were 3 different companies who performed the number crunching duties during the golden age. The Cooperative Analysis of Broadcasting was the first organization to monitor the popularity of the radio programs. The C.A.B. did this from the 1930-1931 season to the 1934-1935 season. C. E. Hooper, Inc. monitored the ratings throughout the majority of the golden age. It began its services during the 1935-1936 season and monitored the numbers until the 1948-1949 season. The A. C. Nielsen Company, the same outfit that monitors the TV ratings today, took over the final years of radio's golden age. It began during 1949-1950 season and continued until the 1955-1956 season."

The initial ratings by the C.A.B. were known as Crossleys, named after Archibald Crossley, the man who conducted them. Crossley used random numbers from telephone directories and called people in about thirty cities to ask them what radio programs they had listened to the day before his call. This method became known as the recall method because people were remembering what they had listened to the previous day. When the Hooper organisation took over, their methodology was similar to the previous system operated by Crossley except that respondents were asked what programs they were listening to at the time of the call. In due course, the A. C. Nielsen Company used the audiometer, a mechanical black box inserted into a radio set to record stations being listened.

The media industry relies on *ratings* and *share* to compare station and programme viewership. Radio and television both use ratings and the mathematical computations are identical. A rating is the number of listeners or viewers who are listening to a radio station or watching a television program divided by the number of listeners or viewers in a population that have a radio

or a television. This formula yields a percentage but it is expressed as a number. For instance, 13% is expressed as a 13 rating. *Ratings* consider everyone with a radio or television. *Share* measures the percentage of listeners who are actually listening to a particular programme.

Ratings were originally obtained from Danny Goodwin's site for evening radio programmes up to 1956 and clearly Sunday night was the night for a big radio audience. Weekday ratings were usually lower. The ratings include all programmes and often straight comedy shows came out on top of the lists. In the first year of the ratings (1930-31), the top show was *Amos 'N' Andy* with an incredible rating of 53.4. The programme was broadcast every night at 7 p.m. from Monday to Saturday on the NBC Blue network and it was sponsored by Pepsodent. The second rated show was Rudy Vallee's *Fleischmann's Yeast Hour* at 36.5.

Bing's ratings

Bing went into national radio in the 1931-32 season and his late night show for Cremo attracted a rating of only 6.9 compared with Amos 'n' Andy (38.1), Rudy Vallee (24.7) and Paul Whiteman (19.1). He missed most of the 1932-33 season until he took part in the *Music That Satisfies* series but the show's short run meant that it did not feature in the top 20 ratings which were headed by Eddie Cantor's Sunday night programme for Chase & Sanborn (a fantastic rating of 58.6).

Bing and Jimmy Grier at work for Woodbury

Bing started his 2-year stint for Woodbury the following year and went straight into the top 20 reaching 14th position with 25.1. His evening show *Bing Crosby Entertains* was the highest rated for Mondays. The top show for the 1933-34 season was again Eddie Cantor's Sunday evening programme with a rating of 50.2. Rudy Vallee was in third place with 39.0.

After this encouraging start for Woodbury, it was perhaps surprising that Bing's rating dropped to 15.5 in the 1934-35 season leaving him out of the top 20 which began at a level of 18.0 that year. The top show was Rudy Vallee with 38.5. One 'Monday only' show was in the top 20 and that was the Sinclair Weiner Minstrels which reached 20.8. Obviously Monday was not a popular night with the radio audience but did that relatively average rating help persuade Woodbury not to renew Bing's contract? The trade press said not.

> **Crosby, Woodbury Ideas Disagree**
> Woodbury has not renewed with Bing Crosby for the fall. Primarily, standing in the way of a new contract is the refusal of the account to again allow the singer to have full control over the programme. Under the past season's arrangement, Crosby picked his own supporting cast and numbers. Crosby has turned down other propositions because they call for his being part of a variety show.
> (*Variety*, May 15, 1935)

The Kraft Years

Bing began hosting the Thursday night *Kraft Music Hall* in January 1936 and the show's overall rating for the 1935-36 season was 14.8 which put it in seventeenth place on the ratings list. The Sunday night *Major Bowes Amateur Hour* was in top place with a Hooper rating of 45.2. Rudy Vallee and his *Fleischmann's Yeast Hour*, broadcast on a Thursday two hours earlier than the Kraft show, was in second place with 28.2. Bing's programme reached the East Coast at 10 p.m. but despite this relatively late hour, the show had the third highest rating for a Thursday night broadcast.

Season 1936-37 saw Bing at the helm of the *Kraft Music Hall* throughout and the show shot up the ratings to grab sixth place with 22.4, narrowly behind *Major Bowes Amateur Hour* which came in at 23.2 to be the top Thursday night programme. Rudy Vallee's show on the same night slipped back to twelfth. The top shows of the season were the Sunday night broadcasts of Eddie Cantor (29.1) and Jack Benny (28.6). The critics had warmed to Bing's show too.

> Bing Crosby's program for Kraft is one of the season's slickest examples of touching up a program with small details, snatches of saucy dialogue and other tricks and trappings—none of them remarkable but in the assembled show, producing a mood and a tempo that makes for popularity. Lines assigned to Bing Crosby have certain finessing with the type of stuff Ben Bernie does. This is not to suggest any imitative quality or any close resemblance but surely that the leisurely sort of whimsy, Crosby is doing, has

a precedent of success on the air. Last Thursday, the 17th, was neither the best nor the least of the recent Crosby broadcasts. It was very typical and as such, worth considering in some detail. It would be impossible to recall one gag, one memorable twist or one catchphrase. Yet the hour moved with a kind of radioesque sophistication.
(*Variety*, December 23, 1936)

The next year saw Bing and his KMH show still in sixth position with 23.1 but now it was the highest rated programme for Thursday nights. The top shows for the 1937-38 season were the Sunday night broadcasts of Edgar Bergen (plus Charlie McCarthy) at 39.4 and Jack Benny (34.0). Interestingly, Al Jolson's show for Lifebuoy on Tuesday nights was in fifth place with 23.5.

The season of 1938-39 saw further consolidation by Bing as he and Kraft reached fourth position with 24.5. They were only headed by Edgar Bergen (35.1, Sundays), Jack Benny (31.4, Sundays) and Lux Radio Theatre (27.0, Mondays).

As the end of the decade approached, Bing still had the most popular Thursday night show with KMH on a rating of 23.3 which left him in seventh place overall for the 1939-40 season. The top show was again that of Edgar Bergen (34.6, Sundays) and Bob Hope made an impact on the ratings, hitting sixth position with 25.0 for his Tuesday broadcast. But there were rumblings from the critics.

Heretical observation—Is it not possible that too much of a good thing is as bad for the ears as it is for the stomach? Specifically, the Kraft program is now, so loaded with overdone Bing Crosby vocabulary stuff, that the whole program threatens to become the same. The sentences are now as long as the twine on a make-believe gift box. Simple, routine thoughts are dressed up as literary sunbursts. The program has lost part of its sparkle and any respect it ever possessed for brevity... Granting that the Kraft program has been a big success and that it has contributed more than its mite to radio technique, the time may be approaching for the introduction of a new idea. There are suggestions of self-enchantment with the mere sound of polysyllabics.
(*Variety*, March 20, 1940)

During the 1940-41 radio season, the *Kraft Music Hall* fell back slightly in the ratings as its figure of 18.6 put it in eleventh position overall. As was becoming the custom, the shows with the highest ratings originated on Sunday nights and were Jack Benny (36.2) and Edgar Bergen (32.2). Bob Hope was in third place with his Tuesday show. KMH was no longer the highest rated show for Thursdays as it was beaten by *The Aldrich Family* (a popular middle class family comedy), Frank Morgan and Fanny Brice's *Maxwell House Coffee Time* and the *Major Bowes Amateur Hour*. The reviews for KMH were better though as this example shows.

Preceded by the usual half-truth, half-publicity reports that the show was going to be "different," Bing Crosby returned last week to the Kraft Music Hall, restoring it to the slickness which in times past, if not in the last months, has been exemplary.

More music and more singing there may have been but it would take a stop-watch to tell the difference as between music and dialogue, so far as an ear that has not heard the show for a long time was concerned. Instead of stressing that the show was "different," it might be truer to describe it as "better." It gave every evidence of being thoughtfully put together entertainment, wherein a master stylist of song was visited by sundry personalities and all of them talked like Carroll Carroll—Connie Boswell talked that way, Wingy Manone talked that way, Bill Frawley was thoroughly Carrollesque.

There were "bits" and "fade-ins" and "gags" and Bob Burns losing his place in the script. So maybe Bing Crosby did sing a bit more (he should) and Connie Boswell was added to the program for the series (she's good) and the press department made the most of it (they would) but actually, the Kraft formula was little changed in basic components.

The show may have been pretty gabby last year and those responsible may be well advised to guard against this. The Carroll patter is often sharply witty, usually colorful, Americana that H. L. Mencken should incorporate in his classic works on American "slanguage" but anything so brittle and inventive carries risks, as in fast handball—if you hit and miss you can break your wrist. A dull stretch of polysyllabic drive would be bad even in a mid-morning "sustainer." However, this "getaway" broadcast was a model of finesse in script, performance and directorial tempo—it was strictly wonderful—the authority of the star, the embellishments implicit in Miss Boswell's presence, the adroit bringing in and exploitation of several guest personages, all spelled big time radio.
(*Variety*, November 23, 1940)

Bing on his Kraft show.

Season 1941-42 saw the *Kraft Music Hall* in twelfth place in the Hooper ratings at 21.1. Edgar Bergen was top with 35.2. Bing missed a few shows as he was away entertaining the troops and whilst the show overtook the *Major Bowes Amateur Hour* on Thursdays, it still lagged behind *The Aldrich Family* and *Maxwell House Coffee Time* (still featuring Frank Morgan and Fanny Brice). Edgar Bergen (+ Charlie McCarthy) regained top position with 35.2 and Fibber McGee & Molly grabbed second place on 33.3 with their Tuesday night show.

Bob Hope hit the top of the ratings in season 1942-43 with 40.9 for his Tuesday show for Pepsodent and he was closely followed by Red Skelton on 40.7. The Kraft show fell back to a still satisfactory 13th. position but its rating of 23.1 was beaten by other Thursday shows, namely *The Aldrich Family, Maxwell House Coffee Time, Abbott & Costello* and Rudy Vallee. Changes to the format of the *Kraft Music Hall* were made from January 1943 and it reduced to a 30 minute show instead of the one hour format used previously.

The Kraft show remained around the same position in the ratings in season 1943-44 attaining a steady 12th. position with 22.2. The highest rated show was the *Fibber McGee & Molly* programme with 31.9 closely shadowed by Bob Hope on 31.6 and Red Skelton on 31.4. Comedy as opposed to music appeared to be what the audiences wanted in those wartime years. However Bing soon bounced back.

His first show for Kraft in the 1944/45 season followed his return from his trip to Europe to entertain the troops. His film *Going My Way* was being seen all over the country and this must all have helped to draw a bigger radio audience. Mind you the critics were not impressed by his return to the airwaves.

> Somewhere along the line that heretofore, sock, Bing Crosby-Kraft-Comedy-Musical format that Carroll Carroll invariably succeeded in wrapping up into one of the boff nighttime radio shows has been lost in the shuffle. Unfortunately, what the Groaner came up with on his initial broadcast of the new season, last Thursday (9th), was a far cry from the entertaining stanza that made the 9 to 9:30 NBC, Thursday niche a valuable showmanship commercial time segment.
>
> Apparently, Crosby, if reports are accurate, has won his way. He's long wanted to de-emphasize the show's comedy pattern and stay closer to a musical format. He's done it in spades, with a resultant lusterless quality that made the tee-off stanza, at times, almost unidentifiable except for the fact that the Groaner's singing, now, as always is in a class by itself but from the production standpoint the show's qualities were nil.
>
> The Crosby banter that was part and parcel of the program's warmth and infectiousness was completely gone and what was left was something that approximated the insertion of an ordinary daytime, Crosby, transcribed show into nighttime programming. The initial rating won't tell the story, for, unquestionably the Groaner's legion of fans were on hand to welcome him back, expecting the usual fare but as a safe bettor, the Hooper's and the Crossley's, in the next five or six weeks will be very revealing if Crosby stands pat on the format that prevailed last Thursday.
> (*Variety*, November 15, 1944)

Despite this slow start, the Kraft show reached a very pleasing third place in the ratings for 1944-45 with 25.8 and was topped by only Bob Hope (34.1) and *Fibber McGee & Molly* (30.8). Bing left the Kraft show in June 1945 and did not return until February 1946. As a result the KMH rating for 1945-46 fell to 17.5 and it was in 20th place in the ratings. The top show of the season was *Fibber McGee & Molly* with 30.8.

Philco Radio Time

Robert Taylor guests on the Philco show.

As we know, Bing left Kraft because he wanted to record his shows and he gambled by moving to the fledgling ABC set-up which had grown out of the NBC Blue network. After a good start on October 16, 1946, the ratings fell back and by December, press comment was stating that Bing's transcribed radio show was now "the season's major disappointment." The transcribed discs were felt not to be satisfactory and appeared metallic and fuzzy. Bing was said to be too casual, with even his singing not tidy and sure and sometimes off-key. His relaxed charm seemed to be missing and there was an apparent preoccupation to get each programme done. However, the addition of higher calibre guest stars such as Al Jolson helped the show to recover to leave Bing's *Philco Radio Time* on 16.1 for the 1946-47

season. The show was just outside the top 20 which was headed jointly by Bob Hope and *Fibber McGee & Molly* with 30.2. The only ABC show in the top 20 was the Sunday night *Jergens Journal* (with Walter Winchell) in ninth position. Winchell's Sunday night gossip show ran for more than two decades and he combined a nose for news with an almost flawless sense of showmanship to produce a dynamic 15-minute show breaking many important news stories.

A switch to the use of tape recorders for editing the programmes helped the Philco show reach 20th. position in season 1947-48 with 16.8. Fred Allen topped the charts with 28.7 and it must have been galling for Bing to see the *Kraft Music Hall* with Al Jolson as host reach eleventh place with 21.4. The only other ABC shows in the top 20 were *Jergens Journal* (with Walter Winchell) and *This Is Your FBI*.

Bing's final season with Philco in 1948-49 saw him at No. 19 in the Hooper ratings with 15.7. The top show was *Lux Radio Theatre* on 28.6. With the radio audience seeming to prefer the bigger networks of NBC and CBS, it made sense to consider leaving ABC and that was what Bing did.

The Bing Crosby Show for Chesterfield

The switch to CBS for the 1949-50 season paid off for Bing and his new show reached No. 9 in the ratings with 18.0. Jack Benny topped the charts at 25.3 with his Sunday night programme. The only ABC programme in the top 20 was Walter Winchell. However, it was clear that audiences were starting to desert radio for TV. Variety magazine's comments on the opening show were apposite.

> CBS's pay-off year in the wake of Bill Paley's Capital Gains manoeuvres rolled into high gear last Wednesday (21st) when Bing Crosby, now waving the Chesterfield banner, officially unveiled the transferred 'Bing's Day' on the Columbia kilocycles. The Bingo's smooth rolling package is now sandwiched between Groucho Marx and Burns & Allen's. A triumvirate that stacks up as Hooper-happy as anything on the Paley programme agenda with the possible exception of the Jack Benny - Amos 'n' Andy - Edgar Bergen - Red Skelton, Sunday night parlay. Granted, that to many and possibly to Crosby himself, judging from his capacity to kid himself on the subject - the Groaner isn't groaning in those same superlative keys as of yore. Yet, Wednesday night 9.30 on CBS is currently as jam-packed with entertainment as those Thursday night whirls on NBC's Kraft Music Hall when Crosby was presiding over its destinies or, Wednesday at 9 on ABC, last semester, when Philco was picking up the expensive tab, for the Crosby touch is unmistakably there.
> (*Variety*, September 28, 1949)

The 1950-51 season was disappointing for Bing's show as the audience share for the season was only 10.0 and the show was just outside the top 20 ratings as assessed by Nielsen, which began at 11.6. The top radio show for the season was the Lux Radio Theater with a rating of only 21.0, confirming the increasing impact of television.

In 1951-52, the show again did not reach the top 20 and the most highly rated radio show for the season was the Amos 'N' Andy program with 17.0. The critics liked the programme though.

> Bing Crosby is probably one of the most affable performers in radio. Year in and year out, he's held a commanding position on the air by virtue of warm, easy verbiage and a song style that's made him the number one pop-singer. His return to the airways, after a summer hiatus indicates that Crosby will maintain his audiences. It's a delightful show, easy on the ears, in a program that provides a maximum of relaxation. Crosby indicated that he is still to warm up to his assignment. He hasn't hit his stride, as yet but there's no doubt that his Wednesday night stanza will be strong enough to give listeners the kind of show they want.
>
> ...As always Bill Morrow and Murdo MacKenzie have produced an excellent show even though the initial session had the proceedings formularised a bit too rigidly. Morrow's writings are order-built for the Groaner's effortless delivery.
> (*Variety*, October 10, 1951)

Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall help Bing sound off for Chesterfield watched by a kangaroo!

The GE Show 1952-54

After three seasons with Chesterfield, Bing switched to General Electric as his sponsor for the 1952-53 season. The audience share for the season was 6.5 which

enabled the program to scrape in to twentieth position in the Nielsen ratings. The top show was the Sunday night broadcast from Amos 'N' Andy with 14.2. The review of Bing's opening show on October 9, 1952 was favourable.

> Bing Crosby is back for another semester in radio and this time, flying the General Electric colours. Chesterfield gave him the go-by at the wind up of last season, along with Bob Hope, considering the weekly tab too high. The Hollywood and Vine reports have it that, as with Jack Benny before him, the production, accoutrements and bankroll on Bing's showcase have been trimmed in keeping with the 'radio re-appraisal', if so, GE has grabbed itself a good deal. For there is no perceptible change - so far as the listener is concerned - either in Crosby or his entourage. If the opening stanza lacked some of the sharpness and the brittleness of the Crosby romps in the past, the track record is sufficient warranty that in another couple of weeks the Thursday night 9.30 to 10.00 slot on CBS will be rockin' to the customary Crosby mastery. Not that one needed too much reassurance on his first time out, last week. His brief encounter with Joe Venuti (leading up to fiddlin' virtuosity), his by-play with announcer, Ken Carpenter; his soloing on 'Auf Wiedersehn' and his dueting with Jane Wyman on, 'Zing A Little Zong' (on reprise from their Par film click 'Just For You') were all grooved to the Crosby touch and manner, even though some of the dialogue spark was lacking. Significantly, The Groaner tipped on his GE preem that he'll be TV bound, (presumably under the same sponsorship auspices) when he winds up a film chore in Europe. The only despondent note in the show were the heavy handed and trip-hammered GE plugs with both Crosby and Carpenter equally guilty.
> (*Variety*, October 15)

The following year, 1953-54 threw up some interesting figures. The radio audiences had all but disappeared and the highest rated show was Art Linkletter's *People Are Funny* with 8.4 but it was very pleasing to see Bing in seventh place with 6.0. He had switched to a Sunday night time slot for the first time and it seemed that if people were going to listen to the radio, they still wanted to hear Bing.

> Sunday is now Bingsday on CBS Radio and no matter where you move him, the loyal will find him. His voice and personality have the magic of the Pied Piper and even without his long-time "themer" ("Blue Of The Night") he'll be fished out of the receiver. To many, the crooner may have given the impression that he's easing off and letting another generation carry on but that's his style. If it doesn't fit snugly into his range, he's let it alone. From the swingy "Down by the Riverside" down through ballad, whimsy and romance, he lilted his larynx in approved Crosby style which is still good enough to warm ears and excite the senses.
> (*Variety*, September 30, 1953)

Lindsay Crosby joins his Dad on the GE programme.

However, advertisers were simply not going to pay out large sums for a radio broadcast any more and the big money switched to television. In May, 1954, Bing closed down his operation, parting company with John Scott Trotter after 17 years and had more or less decided to retire from radio. However he was tempted back with a new format.

The 15-minute show 1954-56

On November 22, 1954, Bing returned to the air with *The Bing Crosby Show* on CBS radio. This was a daily weekday fifteen-minute show (preceding the Amos 'n' Andy show) which continued until December 31, 1956, with a variety of sponsors. It started off on a sustaining basis (i.e. without a sponsor) for the first few weeks and the audience rating was 3.1 for 1954-55 which earned the programme fourteenth position in the Nielsen ratings. Jack Benny's show was in top position with 5.8. The format of Bing's new show had him talking about everyday matters interspersed with songs by him. The songs used were a mixture of his commercial recordings and songs specially recorded with Buddy Cole and his Trio.

> **Bing Crosby Show - 15 mins Monday thru Friday 9.15 pm**
> The way they used to tell it that 'the sun never set on the British Empire'; Der Bingle still retains an Empire of sorts (money aside). What with resurrection of those platters far and wide on the kilocycle horizons, it's been more than a score of years now since Crosby started groaning low and high on CBS from the top and bottom of the Decca. Either way he took command, setting pace and records that figure to stand forever or, if not, to be enshrined in a special vault, along with the antique statistics of a sports firmament, he loves so well. He chalked up so many 'firsts' that it's becoming a

cliché to call the roll. So now, Bing Crosby is on a CBS radio, across the board quarter, in the fractional 9.15 pm time that listeners are bound to find. He's now the elder statesman singer, the doyen of his bracket and as great a radio personality, as ever....Bing is an exponent of the 'sing' but his talk is true, an incredible combination that he's made all his own, over the years, whether on an hour's kick or on tit-bits of this or that.

Monday's opener on the 22nd seemed less than fifteen minutes but even twice that much would still seem fleeting. It's one sure measure of his standing as a performer that CBS program vice president, Lester Gottlieb must have had to talk even faster and more engagingly to sell Crosby this daily deal... If the Amos 'N' Andy Music Hall does not get its inheritance from Crosby and Crosby himself doesn't rate a rating, radio is, indeed, on the way to nowhere.

(*Variety*, November 24, 1954)

Well, as we know, the golden age of radio had indeed finished. Bing's show reached 10th place in the ratings for the 1955-56 season with 2.2. The top show was *Our Miss Brooks* (starring Eve Arden) with 4.3. TV had won easily.

Danny Goodwin's web site did not give ratings for any subsequent years so I cannot tell you how the Crosby-Clooney show fared in 1960-62. However, the ratings confirm that Bing was one of the top weekday musical attractions on radio for 25 years as well as being the top recording artist and one of the major cinema stars at the same time. A record that can never be surpassed.

Malcolm Macfarlane

BING ON THE BOX

FOR ONE NIGHT ONLY

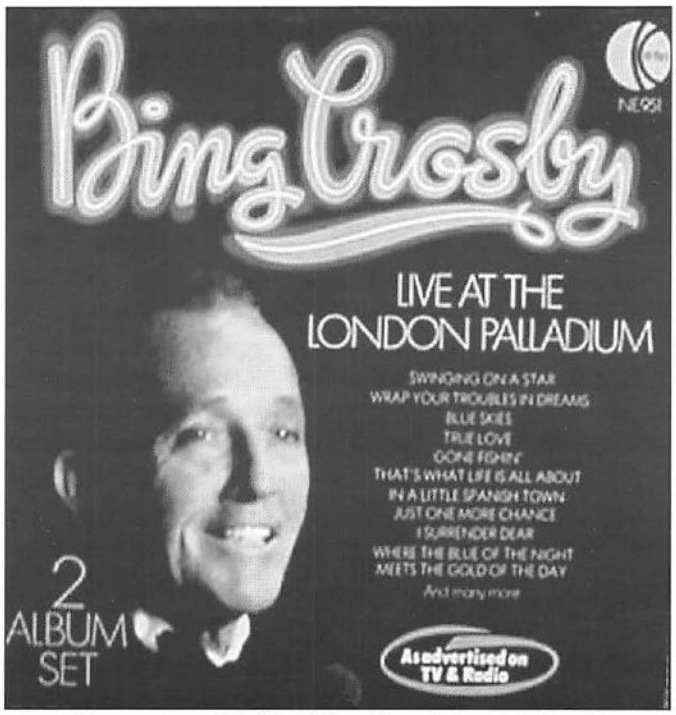
That was the title of an initially surprising and very welcome programme broadcast on BBC Radio 4 at 10.30 a.m. on the morning of Saturday the 9th September. I say 'initially surprising' because some weeks prior to the broadcast the BBC had punted around ICC members, and other likely contributors, in order to build up a picture of what it was like to attend Bing Crosby's 50th Anniversary Concert at, as Bing put it himself, 'The Mecca of all strolling players', the London Palladium.

In a series of four half hour programmes by that title the BBC saved the best till last which presenter Paul Gambaccini opened with the words "I am retracing the steps of Bing Crosby in an aisle in the stalls of the London Palladium. In 1976 Bing recorded his last top ten album here celebrating his fiftieth anniversary in show business. During that concert he performed a medley of over thirty songs which gave him an opportunity to leave the hot stage and walk amongst the audience which included a younger version of me sitting right here."

Among the regular ICC members taking part were Ken Crossland, Gwen Harvey and Malcolm Macfarlane. Ken: "Bing was the first genuine, international celebrity. It was just the thing that we all hoped for but never thought we'd ever see; Bing taking centre stage at the London Palladium, in great voice and singing the songs of a lifetime."

Gwen: "I was just so excited - I'd waited since 1930 to see him. It was just marvellous because it was something we'd not expected. I'm not saying he was as good as he was in the 'thirties but he was still ten times better than anybody else!"

Malcolm: "Inside the theatre there was a real buzz in the air. The lights dimmed, the curtains pulled back ..... and then Bing Crosby walks on to the stage. What a moment! We hadn't really expected him to come on at the beginning. Most stars came on for the last twenty minutes and sang a few songs but there he was at the beginning!"


Bing Crosby
LIVE AT THE LONDON PALLADIUM
SWINGING ON A STAR
WRAP YOUR TROUBLES IN DREAMS
BLUE SKIES
TRUE LOVE
GONE FISHIN'
THAT'S WHAT LIFE IS ALL ABOUT
IN A LITTLE SPANISH TOWN
JUST ONE MORE CHANCE
I SURRENDER DEAR
WHERE THE BLUE OF THE NIGHT MEETS THE GOLD OF THE DAY
And many more
2 ALBUM SET
As advertised on TV & Radio

Sitting alongside Paul Gambaccini were Ken Barnes and Pete Moore, producer and musical director respectively who were responsible for the production of the double LP, recorded over two performances as the level of applause took Ken by surprise! Both were to make a considerable contribution to the programme and their impressions were equally perceptive and informative. "Seeing Bing walk out on the stage of the Palladium on that first night I thought this man is walking up to a microphone and I don't think there's anybody else in the whole world who has had more experience of a microphone.", said Ken, who also imparted his feeling that Bing, was a great 'ad-libber' who would sometimes save a line for an opportune

moment. And Malcolm also thought he would deliberately get a word or two wrong [as occasionally in the medley lyrics] as part of his act. Pete Moore, who was the musical director / conductor for the show itself said "Basically we had a big band of forty or fifty musicians. He [Bing] had a great 'ear' and an elegant way of phrasing - there's elegance in every phrase he sings."

Theatre critic of the *Daily Mirror*, Arthur Thirkell, commented that he went along just to enjoy the show really not expecting too much or take notes, "After all, it wasn't King Lear.", but it turned out to be one of the highlights of his journalistic career. And *The Times* critic felt that only someone like Bing could make The Depression and the war seem like the 'good old days'.

Robert Sidney was the director and choreographer of the show and remarked on Bing's lack of affectation and casualness on stage: "When Princess Margaret and friends came to see the show they came backstage to Bing's dressing room. I was passing and Bing called out 'Hey, Bob, come in here and meet Meg.' How casual is that! And how brave! But Bing was show business royalty and could get away with it."

Bing's daughter Mary Frances, sixteen at the time, also contributed and she, too, talked of her father's relaxed approach. "There he was sitting in his dressing room reading the sports page and drinking a most unsuitable dairy based product, the worst thing that any singer could possibly drink, and I said, Dad, aren't you nervous?" "Nervous? Why should I be nervous?" he replied. Though I suspect this was as much to put his daughter at ease as she, along with the rest of his family, would be on stage with him.

Other family members there on opening night were Bing's sister, Mary Rose, and her daughter Carolyn Schneider, a very active member of the ICC, twice a visitor to the annual Leeds meeting and author of that delightful and personalised biography 'Me And Uncle Bing'. She was to say: "When the intermission came, Mother and I went out into the lobby to get refreshments and I was trying to hear the comments that people from the audience might be making. One gentleman said to his wife 'Not too bad, the old boy's doing pretty well for his age'. I told Uncle Bing and he got a laugh out of it!"

Ken Crossland reminded us that 1976 was rather like 2006 in England with temperatures well into the nineties and probably 110[f] on stage. "I think everybody was aware that this is a man in his early seventies but he never showed any sign of strain. His one concession to the heat came right at the very end at the last curtain call and there was Bing with his jacket slung over his shoulder and the black tie loosened."

A situation further amplified by Pete Moore: "The guys said to me can we take our jackets off? I said when he takes his jacket off you can take your jacket off but until then keep them on."

"We thought we'd seen most of the show when suddenly he says well perhaps it's time to sing a few older songs. He moved into this tremendous medley." said Malcolm; a legitimate excuse for Pete Moore and the orchestra to adjourn to a nearby pub leaving the Joe Bushkin Trio handling the accompaniment.

Of Joe Bushkin, Mary Crosby said: "If there would be such a thing as a Jewish leprechaun Joey would be it. He was the tiny little wiry guy who never knew what he was going to do next." Ken Barnes added his own, humorous comment: "Joe was griping about Bing; he wanted a piano in his apartment. 'He's so tight he won't let me hire a piano.' Bing said 'How long you been playing the piano Joe?

"Twenty-five years."

"Then you should know where middle C is."

There were also previously recorded, retrospective contributions from the show's other participants, comedian Ted Rogers and Rosemary Clooney who's career was resurrected by her invitation to join Bing on tour. Andrea Rice, widow of Eddie, also had a few words to say on the serendipity of their London holiday coinciding with the show. And, of course, there were the songs liberally sprinkled throughout the programme ably and affectionately presented by Paul Gambaccini who was to tell us that when Bing died he was asked to write President Carter's tribute. "For all the roads he travelled in his career Bing Crosby remained a gentleman. Proof that a great talent can be a good man despite the pressures of show business. And as I wrote I thought of Bing standing in the aisle of the London Palladium looking at me for three seconds the summer before."

But the final word goes to Bing's niece, Carolyn: "The show was entitled Bing & Friends and I think it was more than the people on the stage it was the friends in the audience. It was the British people who I felt were saying welcome back, we love you."

BING ON THE SMALL SCREEN

Sonny Tufts joins Bing in song

In the U.K. in July we were treated to *Here Come The Waves* on Sky Cinema. Didn't see it myself being a non-subscriber, and I wondered if *Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate The Positive* was retained bearing in mind the black-face presentation. However, a couple of us did watch it on DVD, shown in its entirety, and enjoyed hearing the

Mercer - Arlen score so tunefully sung. There were a couple more of Bing's familiar films shown on Sky Cinema but again it was the USA which had the better selection this time around.

A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court
Alias Jessie James
Going My Way
High Society
High Time
Let's Make Love
Robin and the 7 Hoods
Stagecoach
The Bells of St. Mary's
The Country Girl
We're Not Dressing
White Christmas

Arne Fogel emailed me to say he hoped to see his program *The Bing Shift*, mentioned in this column. Only too happy to oblige, of course. Arne plays Bing on the radio for an hour every week and has been doing so for many years! As a matter of fact his program can be heard internationally via the internet. It's on via KBEM Jazz88 in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota USA, and can be heard over the KBEM website. The show is heard in the U.S.A. at 8pm CST, every Saturday. Arne's website, www.arnefogel.com, features an easy link to the KBEM website, as well as the song listing for each week's program.

Arne has just finished a 'through the decades' series and by the time you read this will have featured the songs of Harry Ruby which, for Bing, will have an early connection with *Three Little Words*. I hope a lot of members are able to catch the show; an hour of Bing just has to be worth tuning in for. He may even respond to requests!

UK RADIO ROUND-UP

Trawling through the many recordings heard over the airwaves for the present review, it once again became apparent that Bing recorded many titles that were written way before his career began which to all intents and purposes was 1926. Obviously, if you look at the Stephen Foster album they're all from the mid-19th century with *I Dream Of Jeannie* from 1854 a clear winner on David Lowe's *As Time Goes By* Saturday night broadcast heard on BBC Radio Devon 103.4 fm. A couple of hours of tuneful music engagingly presented with our man well represented from 8 to 10 p.m. Similar music, only more up-tempo, occurs on *Singers And Swingers* which David invites west country listeners to tune in to on Sundays. Still in very vintage mode we find *Beautiful Dreamer* 1864, *Just A-Wearying' For You* a hit from 1901, *By The Light Of The Silvery Moon* a Gus Edwards – Edward Madden song from the Ziegfeld Follies Of 1909 and also a hit in Britain in the same year, *Where My Caravan Has Rested.* Bing's version recorded in 1946 wasn't a hit nor deserved to be as he sounds rather strained alongside his accompanists, the Victor Young Orchestra and strange bedfellow Jascha Heifetz on violin. *Let Me Call You Sweetheart* derives from 1910 which Bing twice recorded a decade apart: and what a difference in his voice! In 1912 Irving Berlin wrote *When I Lost You* as a musical tribute to his wife Dorothy who died shortly after their honeymoon in Cuba. It was Berlin's first hit ballad. Bing's 1940 version with The Paradise Island Trio is a sensitive performance, well suited to the arrangement. The Turner Layton – Henry Creamer lament from 1918 *After You've Gone,* as performed by Bing on David's programme, was taken from the 17th February, 1944 Kraft Music Hall with Marilyn Maxwell in attendance. Influential on Bing was *Sinbad*, a 1918 Broadway musical starring Al Jolson, whence comes *Swanee*, Bing's take on which was a commercial release from a radio transcription from May 1956 whereon, accompanied by the Buddy Cole Trio, Bing gives a performance that even Jolson might have grudgingly approved. More lamentations with the 1921 number *Do You Ever Think Of Me?* of similar source and accompaniment to the previous track and, finally, two tracks *Some Sunny Day* and *Mama Loves Papa,* on which Bing and Bob Scobey's 'Frisco Jazz Band share equal honours with the composers on Bing's 1957 recorded versions of songs first published in 1922 and 1923 respectively. A dozen recordings there then of songs which really are vintage! I'm sure David Lowe, who is reaping the benefit of recent Jonzo releases, doesn't deliberately feature such songs from the Crosby collection but those mentioned do represent some 40% of his playings which more likely reflect listener preference by way of requests.

Trevor Fry contrives to be more contemporary with Bing's career as with *If I Knew Then* [hindsight is a wonderful thing!] and *Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate The Positive,* which had the Johnny Mercer lyric been written a decade earlier might well have been considered an antidote to the depression. How many father and son duets are there? Not many I imagine, and *Sam's Song* must be quite a rarity from that aspect. For three hours of lively music *The Late Show* on Radio Bristol 95.5 fm is as good a place on the dial to tune as any if you reside in that region.

THAT FACE

Well, how did David Jacobs get hold of that track? It was sung by Bing on *The Bing Crosby Special,* a television programme dating from 23rd October 1968 and although it was issued on a limited release LP for Crosby collectors [B.C.–T.V. JGB 1007] Mr. Jacobs' acquisition of a copy would have seemed unlikely. He must therefore have extracted the song from the GAV Records CD *Bridge Over Troubled Water* which surfaced in the USA in 2002. As a matter of interest the song was first featured in *An Evening With Fred Astaire,* also a TV spectacular. Our D.J., whose initials are most appropriate, does play Bing from time to time on his musically wholesome programme found on BBC Radio 2 Sunday evenings at 11p.m.

What can one say further about *Harmony Night*? Mr. & Mrs. Rennells [Bill and Angela to their listener friends] are among the most devoted Crosbyphiles ever to take to the airwaves. BBC Thames Valley Sunday nights is their home territory and as recipients of most Crosby CD releases, courtesy of Ernest Sutkowski, they are delighted to be able to fulfill listener requests with a genuine and unaffected naivety which in the world of broadcasting must be unique! They are making good use

of *The Crosby Brothers* CD but are completely unaware of the source material and that most of Bing's solos are alternative takes - for which, Geoff Milne, thank you! Few presenters express such genuine surprise at the conclusion of, say, *Them There Eyes* or *I Love To Dance Like They Used To Dance* as they do having been quite unaware of the five decades separating the recordings with the startling difference of Bing's vocalizing having been made so remarkably apparent.

Howard Leader at BBC Radio Lincolnshire knows exactly what he's playing and why. Main source this time around has been the Bing and Peggy Lee CDs SUN 2085 and SUN 2110, the catalogue numbers for Sunflower releases of most of the two stars' air shots as duets or solos. But Howard has not overlooked some of the less obvious commercial releases either. *I Whistle A Happy Tune* from *The King And I* is not a Bing track one hears that often.

IN THE CORNER

The Crosby Corner, that is. Representing those 'gone but not forgotten', as Anne Hopper puts it. Sadly, no actual listening or tape availability of BBC Radio Cumbria's Music Box programme but Anne has very kindly provided play lists of Bing tracks over the last twelve weeks or so. Titles are all very well, and appreciated, but we miss Anne's very favourable and considered comments that enhance the listening pleasure. Anne has always been partial to Crosby duets and I note from the listings that this trend continues. A track or two from the Crosby Brothers CD; *Small Fry* and *I Waited A Little Too Long* with Donald O'Connor; *Something Sort Of Grandish* with Eddie Fisher's erstwhile missus, and another famous wife, famous in her own right, Lauren Bacall who Bing suffered to sing *I Don't Know Why* with on a 1952 Chesterfield broadcast. Much more melodious for Music Box listeners was *For Me And My Gal* with the 'rainbow' girl herself. A listener requesting a tribute to Bing to mark the anniversary of his death must have been more than pleased when Anne played no less than 7 Crosby duets, back to back, in her newly founded Crosby Corner, with the appropriately titled *Top Billing* heading the list. An interesting feature of Anne's recent programme has been tracks played on their original release date. Thus, *White Christmas* coming through loud and clear on the 1st October. Well, we are all very much aware that Christmas gets earlier each year! If you'd like to contact the programme for a request her email address is: anne.hopper@bbc.co.uk

GREATEST LYRICISTS

In a series of programmes celebrating the twenty greatest song writers Russell Davies [Sunday p.m. BBC Radio 2] selected most of the obvious choices that would spring to mind: Ira Gershwin, Cole Porter, Johnny Mercer, Sammy Fain, 'Yip' Harburg, Johnny Burke, Leo Robin and so forth. As with much of the entertainment industry in America there is in that list a strong Jewish presence - no less than sixteen of the twenty – though Johnny Burke, who was illustrated by *Pennies From Heaven* taken from Bing's autobiography set, was known as the Irish poet among his contemporaries. It is thought by many that a character in the TV series *Bewitched* filled the world with baby girls called Samantha; but Russell went on to explain that this is a fallacy as, in fact, Cole Porter's song *I Love You, Samantha* pre-empts the sorceress's influence. Johnny Green's arrangement along with Satchmo's trumpet work and Bing's great vocal in *High Society* is the principle reason for that of course! Whilst the film's scenario excused it I think we all found it rather frustrating at having to wait so long for Bing to start singing; subsequently more apparent on the record. Of that track Tony Bennett was to say: "....the best performance ever done by a pop singer." Bennett also remarked on a clever key change by Bing after his da-da-da-dum introduction, but you'd be hard put to notice it.

With Bing's rendition of the 'great depression anthem' , *Brother, Can You Spare A Dime?,* popping up in the programme devoted to E.Y. 'Yip' Harburg Mr. Davies advised his listeners that the lyricist said "Before I wrote that song there was no depression!" Such flippancy in the face of a distressing era can be summed up as reflecting that it's better to laugh than cry.

As we take leave of a very brief résumé of Russell's very entertaining programme, by way of the Bing with Bob Scobey track *Let A Smile Be Your Umbrella* written in 1928 by Sammy Fain, let's note Russell's summarized comment, "They don't write songs like that anymore." - and he meant it in the nicest possible way. In the earlier paragraph about Bing's pre-career songs chosen for him to record they were all, of course, from Broadway musicals as Hollywood versions didn't hit the silver screen until 1929. That last mentioned song was included in *It's A Great Life* a 1930 film featuring what a review described as 'old songs'. Which only goes to show that nostalgia ain't what it used to be!

A PROGRAMME OF CONTRASTS

It can be safely said that such a comment applies to Paul Barnes' very varied, mainly jazz orientated record round up. From Stan Kenton, with his punching rhythm and screaming trumpet section, to Bing's *Take Me Back To My Boots And Saddle* is a fair, though perhaps extreme, example. That song, played by Paul somewhat "...tongue-in-cheek, though it has to be said he does it extremely well." is the title put forward on the Crosby calendar for October. Regular listeners to his programme, and readers of this magazine, will know that Paul always describes the calendar photo and plays the 'song of the month' and two or three similarly associated songs by Bing. From the 1944 film *Hollywood Canteen* came *Don't Fence Me In* [which along with *San Fernando Valley* influenced many an ex-American serviceman's choice of post-war location]. With the Andrews Sisters flanking him, Bing rides out to the 'wide open country that I love' with this unusual song from such a sophisticate as Cole Porter. Still 'ridin', rockin', ropin' *When The Bloom Is On The Sage* to the music of John Scott Trotter's Frying Pan Five came this third, Stetson wearing, cowpoke Crosby number. One of Paul's favourite instruments is prominent on that record, as also on *Sweet Potato Piper.* "Delicious! I love the sound of the alto ocarina. They should be taught in schools instead of recorders." In *The Big Broadcast Of 1936*, in just a four minute sequence only, Bing sang the Dorothy Parker – Ralph Rainger number *I Wished On The Moon.* Ms Parker may well have been peeved that the arrangement did not include the lovely verse she had penned. Paul put this to rights when he followed up Bing's Wild West trio of tracks with Marilyn Scott's version. And while we're about it let's note that another currently contemporary chanteuse, the oftimes uncooperative, even bovine characteristically inclined Diana Krall, said in an interview that she was greatly influenced by Bing, Sinatra and Louis Armstrong. "I was born listening to Bing Crosby. I knew all his lyrics by heart by the time I was fifteen. Sounds boring and nerdy but there was something about his phrasing that I loved." To illustrate this Paul played *'Deed I Do* by both Bing and Diana on which the influence is greatly apparent.

Backtracking now to the August calendar when *I Can't Escape From You* was featured, Barnesy asked his listeners [postcards only please] to name Johnny Mercer's first enormous hit song. Apparently there was a good response but how many plumped for *Mr. Gallagher And Mr. Shean* I wonder? As our knowledgeable members will be aware it was *I'm An Old Cowhand* also, like the Leo Robin – Richard Whiting song, from *Rhythm On The Range.* More Mercer followed with *Mr. Meadowlark,* "Was there ever a more amiable coupling?" suggested Paul. Not only tuneful and delightfully performed but one can count at least seven ornithological references in the clever lyric.

The September calendar presentation had a travelling theme. The superior, KMH version of *The Lonesome Road, In My Merry Oldsmobile, Route 66* from a Philco broadcast and Bing and Rosie Clooney out and about with *That Travelin' Two-Beat.* Tracks from the Good And Rare and The Crosby Brothers CDs, including Bob's nice rendition of *Oh, You Crazy Moon,* have also been heard on Barnsey' s *Gold For Grown Ups*-details of where and how to experience his enjoyable programme follow:

Saturdays, 18.00 until 21.00 (BST) on world wide web: www.bbc.co.uk/norfolk or tune in to:
BBC Radio Cambridgeshire - 95.7 and 96.0 FM
BBC Essex - 95.3 and 103.5 FM
BBC Radio Norfolk - 95.1 and 104.4 FM
BBC Radio Northampton - 103.6 and 104.2 FM
BBC Radio Suffolk - 95.5 and 103.9 and 104.6 FM

Just lately there has been a spate of TV ads using older songs: *Cocktails For Two* – Spike Jones' original version, parodies of Cab Calloway's *Kicking The Gong Around* and *Food, Glorious Food,* an Andrews Sisters song, and Bing and Louis with *Gone Fishin'* selling Kingsmill bread. Quite what the connection is I'm not sure – maybe something to do with 'loaves and fishes' and feeding of the five thousand!

Merry Christmas & A Happy New Year!

Bert Bishop, 21st October, 2006

The Road To Leeds 2006

Jane Fitzgerald tells of her recent visit to the annual Leeds meeting in the UK

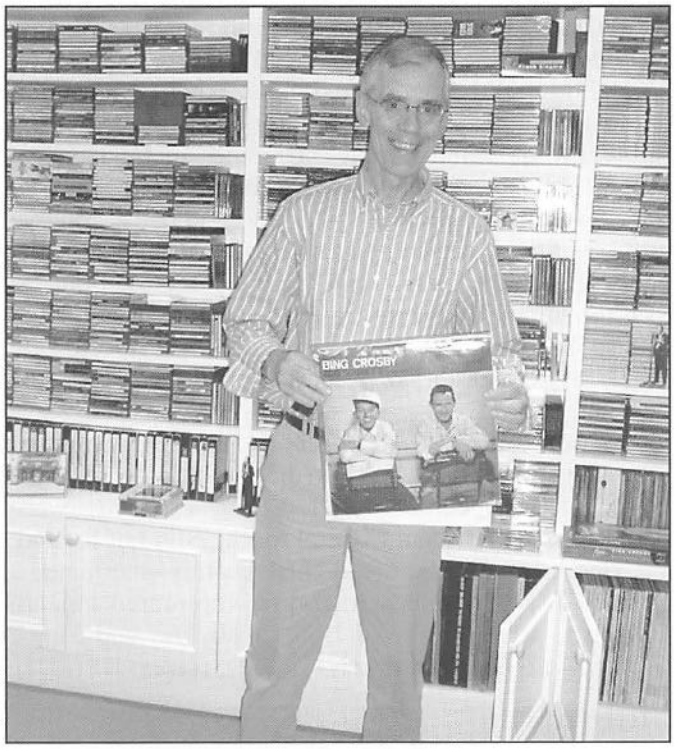
Prelude

Last year when my friend Mary Quinn and I had the pleasure of attending the Leeds meeting for the first time, Malcolm and Pat Macfarlane met us at the airport when we arrived jet-lagged but happy, showed us to the car rental counter where we had reserved a vehicle, led us out of the garage in their car and onward to the train station where we picked up Judy Schmidt. We then followed the Macfarlane car to Ron and Vera Bosley's house where we were joined by John Walton and treated to a lovely lunch. Even better, we were treated to a view of Ron's fabulous collection of photographs of all things Bing-connected. After such an introduction to attending the Leeds meeting, we just had to come back!

This year, Mary and I visited with George O'Reilly in Dublin, Ireland for a few days so that I could work with George on his book about Bing, and we were treated to many special evenings including the Jury's Cabaret show in which the comedian, Joe Cuddy sang a tribute to Bing and recognized George for his contributions to keeping Bing's memory alive and for the release of recent DVD's. We were joined that evening by Dorothy and Derek Perkins and Joe Cuddy mentioned us all by name as a spotlight illuminated our table. We felt like visiting dignitaries!

We were also treated to an evening at Dorothy and Derek's lovely home one evening and spent quite a lot of time on the third floor which houses Derek's amazing collection of Crosby records, CD's, photographs, sheet music and much memorabilia. I thought I had a Crosby collection before I laid eyes on Derek's!

We were especially glad to have time to visit with the Perkins since a family wedding prevented them from being at the Leeds meeting this year.



Derek Perkins with part of his collection.

Leeds 2006

George, Mary and I flew to Leeds on Saturday, September 30th and checked in at the Weetwood Hall Conference Center wondering who else might be coming in from other far-off places. It wasn't long before Gun Damo and Ole Meistrop arrived from Denmark. The five of us had a pleasant evening visiting, and after dinner, we befriended a hotel guest and his two poodles who held court in the lobby. The gentleman who owns the dogs remembered that the International Club Crosby had met there the year before, and when he started talking about the Road movies we challenged him to name them all. With a little bit of prompting he got 5 of them that night; when we met him again in the lobby the next morning, he needed a couple of hints (Zanzibar eluded him), but he did it! We half-expected to see him show up at the meeting!

Speaking of showing up, John Walton arrived, having been tapped by Michael Crampton to assist with the audio/video equipment. He met Michael in the parking lot to unload and set-up. People started to drift in and filed down the hall to the meeting room area which has a lovely lobby in which to visit before and between sessions.

Judy Crampton arrived with Carolyn and Dirk Schneider in tow. Carolyn, as you all know, is Bing's niece, the daughter of his sister Mary Rose. Carolyn was a featured speaker last year, and has since published her book "Me and Uncle Bing". She returned to give us an update and share some of her experiences over the past year, but more on that later.

70th Year of the International Club Crosby, and 41st Leeds Dinner/Meeting

Michael Crampton, looking a bit like Billy No-Mates, greeted the guests and got the meeting going. Alf Bunn lent a hand to assist John Walton and the event opened with the traditional strains of "Where the Blue of the Night Meets the Gold of the Day" (the 1945 version). There was a remembrance of Eddie Rice who passed away at 91. As was reported in the Summer 2006 issue of BING magazine, Eddie was responsible for rescuing a number of Bing's Kraft Music Hall songs for posterity.

Michael then offered a special welcome to several attendees, including Carolyn and Dirk Schneider and first timers Elizabeth Gregory, Chris Gregory, Norman Jones & Mrs. Jones, and Clive Roberts.

While Malcolm and Pat Macfarlane visited the U.S. last year, they visited with several Crosby collectors and ICC members, and Malcolm had his trusty video camera with him. We viewed his interviews with Greg Van Beek and Barry Stapleton. Greg showed off his vast collection, looking appropriately proud, and Barry showed some of the Crosby musical treasures that are housed at the Ward Irish Music Archives in Milwaukee.

Carolyn Schneider then brought us up to date on what she's been doing since her book came out. She's been busy with book signings, of course, but always tries to include a display of photos and CD's, inviting people to visit, not just get the book signed. She did a signing at the Northeastern Nevada Museum at Elko and left behind books and her display. She also attended Gonzaga University's alumni weekend and spent some quality time with Stephanie Plowman. She saw "the vault" housing memorabilia that is not on display, the Crosbyana Room and student center. Carolyn mentioned that because it is a library, Gongaza is interested in obtaining documents and photographs, not memorabilia.

Carolyn has also done several radio interviews over the past 12 months, some on local stations in Las Vegas. One talk-format station opened up her visit to call-ins. One caller, a man named John, asked her if she knew that Bing had done a 1976 concert in Las Vegas as a fundraiser to build a church. The priest in charge of building the church wrote to both Bing and Frank Sinatra. Bing responded first. The priest, who is now an archbishop, had started the church in a closed saloon and appealed to Bing with "I thought you'd like to help me get Jesus out of the saloon!" The event was held at the

Aladdin Hotel Casino November 26, 1976. Carolyn and Dirk made a proposal to do a 30th Anniversary commemoration, but the hotel was sold to Planet Hollywood and they were turned down. Carolyn mentioned that last year she became the first Crosby family member to attend the Leeds meeting, and this year she was the first family member to see the Holy Family church in Las Vegas. By the time the building of the church was completed, Bing had died. One of the stained glass windows is dedicated to Bing. It depicts the flight into Egypt.

Jane (left) and Mary Quinn enjoy their dinner.

We took a break for dinner and when we resumed, the recently released "Poor Little G-String" was played. Clive Roberts then presented a video tour of Paramount Studios and an interview with A.C. Lyles, well known producer who shared a story about Bing befriending a young lad at Paramount named AJ. It was getting close to the holidays and Bing asked AJ about his Christmas shopping; he asked AJ to make a list of 20 of his family and friends whom he would have on his shopping list. AJ dutifully, if quizzically, made the list and gave it to Bing, then never thought about it again – until one day he found 20 albums that Bing had signed and given him to distribute to his 20 family members and friends back home in Jacksonville, Florida. AJ is still alive, and is over 80 now. In the video, A.C. Lyles told the story of the bike accident on the Paramount lot when he knocked Bing off his bike. Bing just looked at him as said "What didn't you like, the singer or the song?"

Musical Demons

Arnold Pope then introduced the 24th annual Musical Quiz, a series of ten audio challenges that defied a perfect score. We collectively gave a sigh of relief that neither Malcolm nor Ken Crossland were in attendance, giving each of us that much more of a chance to win, place or show. Ole Meistrop won, with the most correct answers.

Michael Crampton mentioned his 50 years of membership and how he travelled to Newcastle on a train to meet Frank Murphy, then Editor of the club magazine. Frank had a stack of 78's that he'd gotten from a D.J. and Michael took the entire stack home with him. That story reminded Carolyn Schneider that she has an acetate of Bing singing "Love and Marriage" for Bill Morrow's wedding.

Photo Finish

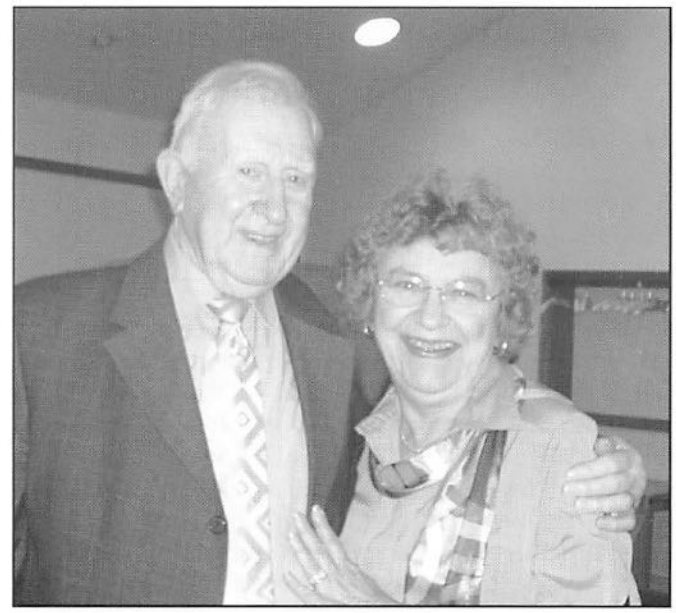
Having mentioned Ron Bosley's wonderful collection of photographs earlier, it was a delightful surprise when Michael announced that, since Ron and Vera had moved and downsized, Ron had contributed 4 boxes full of photographs to be used by the ICC to raise funds. It was decided to auction them, rather than hold a raffle, because of the potential for realizing more money. After the 4 rounds of bidding ended, Carolyn and Dirk Schneider had one box, Mary Quinn had one and I had two! Ron, your photos are in good hands over here in the U.S.A. (I'm still no closer to equaling Derek Perkins' collection.)

A Little Bit O'Reilly

George O'Reilly introduced "A Little Bit of Irish" and recounted his meeting with Bing's business manager, Basil Grillo, at Bing's office. Mr. Grillo told George that he understood that Bing had agreed to make a television special in Ireland and asked how, when Bing could command large sums of money for appearances around the world, he would do an appearance in Ireland as a favor. George could only respond that Bing had agreed to do it. Grillo's reply was "over my dead body." But we all know how it turned out – and now we can watch the entire special on DVD. Bing gave George the rights *to A Little Bit of Irish*, and after much discussion with Varese Sarabande records regarding royalties etc. the DVD was released 40 years after the special had originally aired.

George also talked about his programme, "Remembering Bing" held at the Helix in Dublin last October. 806 people attended, and proceeds were donated to the National Council for the Blind of Ireland.

George mentioned that he had recently entertained a couple of Crosby family members who toured Ireland, Debbie Crosby, widow of Bob Crosby Jr., and Janice Crosby, wife of Howard (who is Ted's son).



George O'Reilly and Carolyn Schneider

Alan Fisher was remembered by George who used to speak with him by telephone every few weeks. George recalled one of the last phone calls from Alan, who told him "I want you to know that Norma and I love you very much." When George expressed concern over why Alan would be saying this, Alan shared with him the news that the doctor had been there and that he probably wouldn't live until Christmas. Alan made it through the holidays, but died the first week of January of this year.

George is also working with Ken Barnes who is trying to get several of Bing's radio shows released on CD the near future.

We were then treated to the video portion of "Remembering Bing", George's show at the Helix last October, but it was cut short to make way for some recently released Hollywood Palace cuts. As it was almost 10 p.m., we watched a few of the Hollywood Palace segments as Michael said goodnight and see you next year, and then we heard the strains of "A Perfect Day."

It was a lovely day and a lovely visit. I must thank Judy Crampton who returned to the hotel the very next morning to collect Mary Quinn and take her shopping for chocolates (it's a long story). Judy then returned Mary to the lobby and picked up Gun and Ole to take them on a tour of the Yorkshire Dales. Thanks also to George O'Reilly who really knows how to show a couple of Irish-American gals a great time. Actually, thanks to everyone who attended the meeting. You are a warm, welcoming group of people who prove once again that Crosby fans are the nicest people in the world.

Since 2007 marks the 30th anniversary of Bing's death, I'd like to think a lot of us will be in attendance. Let's all try.

Jane Fitzgerald

(Editor: Thanks Jane for a most comprehensive report. John Walton has some comments about the day too.)

Michael Crampton's success in having sustained the Leeds event for 41 years lies in his ability to keep it 'a family affair'. Even though it now takes place in the prestigious Weetwood Hall, its origins in Michael's living room all those years ago can still be discerned. The Bing fans who have extended the family over the years have complete ownership, the way Michael likes it. Significantly, at the end of the day, he asks: 'Do you want to do it again next year?' *(He's greeted with applause)* Note that there is never a suggestion of 'Shall we do it again for you?'

So this is a tolerant convention when things go wrong. This year Weetwood Hall, advertising itself as the 'largest conference centre in the north of England', failed to reach the standards it likes to set itself in food, technical assistance, air conditioning or conference playback facilities. (This last I'm all too aware of, having grappled with the problems which arose from my straightforward attempts to show glitch-free Bing extracts!) Michael, happy after his 41st agreeable family get-together, responded by saying he would have a quiet word and the problems would be resolved for next time. A calm reaction and one that is a sure indication of why his event has been and remains so successful.

Carolyn was received with great affection; Malcolm's presence was missed; the event as a whole exuded the warmth and hospitality that you would expect from a family of Bing devotees.

John Walton

(Editor: I was disappointed to miss the meeting (for only the second time in 28 years) as a result of my own stupidity. Although we had had our main holiday earlier this year, a month or two later I noticed an advert offering a very competitive price for a trip to Beijing on September 28 followed by a cruise to Shanghai, South Korea and Japan. Pat and I jumped at the chance to visit these far away places which have always attracted us and we quickly booked our tickets. It was a week later when I eventually realised that October 1st usually followed September 28 and I would therefore miss Leeds! I attempted to compensate for my absence by sending along some DVD compilations but I'll make sure I'm there next year.)

Once In A While

Personalities associated with Bing who have died since our last issue was prepared include:

Red Buttons, the comedian and actor, died on July 13 at age 87. After a meteoric rise and fall as a television star in the early 1950s, the one-time burlesque performer got a supporting role in *Sayonara*, the 1957 film based on James Michener's book about U.S. servicemen stationed in Japan during the Korean War. He won an Oscar and channeled the win into a career as a comedic and dramatic character actor in more than 25 films.

He was born Aaron Chwatt in 1919 in the Bronx, New York, and was the son of an immigrant Jewish milliner. By 1939, he had joined Minsky's burlesque troupe, playing a baggy-pants comic who billed himself as the "Only Burlesque Comedian with All His Own Teeth." He debuted on Broadway in 1942 in "Vickie," then his theater career was cut short by the World War II draft. Buttons served as an entertainer in special services and played a pilot in the stage and film versions of *Winged Victory*, meant to promote war bonds.

After the war, he returned to the stage and performed comedy at top clubs and on TV variety shows. His 1952 CBS variety series "The Red Buttons Show" displayed his rapid-fire style, and quickly became a hit. The show's ratings faded in its second year, and CBS canceled it. NBC picked up the show and changed the format from variety to a situation comedy about a TV comic, played by Buttons with Phyllis Kirk as his wife. The show lasted one season. Producers of the movie "Sayonara" reluctantly hired Buttons, out of work after his TV career fizzled, for the role of Sergeant Joe Kelly, who marries a Japanese woman. The role, wildly unlike his slapstick work, earned him the 1957 best supporting actor Oscar and Golden Globe. He worked consistently in Hollywood over the next two decades, starring in comedies like *Hatari!* (1962), *Pete's Dragon* (1977), *Movie Movie* (1978), and *18 Again!* with George Burns (1988). He also had dramatic roles in movies like *The Longest Day* (1962) and *The Poseidon Adventure* (1972). He was also in the remake of the classic 1939 John Wayne film *Stagecoach* with Bing in 1965.

Red Buttons helps 'Doc Boone' get ready to deliver Stephanie Powers' baby in Stagecoach.

It would seem that he got along with Bing reasonably well because Red appeared in the Hollywood Palace Show of April 1, 1967 when he and Bing took part in a "Joe The Bartender" sketch. Buttons frequently appeared on variety and talk shows and specials and guest-starred on dozens of series, including *ER, Roseanne,* and *The Love Boat.* He continued to headline comedy shows into his 80s. In 1995, Buttons performed a one-man show, "Buttons on Broadway" at the Ambassador Theater where he had appeared in burlesque a half-century earlier.

Mike Douglas, the genial namesake host of the 1963-1982 talk shows, passed away on his 81st birthday on 11th August. Guests on Douglas' long-running show, which debuted on local TV in Cleveland in 1961, and went national two years later, were an eclectic bunch: Muhammad Ali; Liberace; Sylvester Stallone, Judy Garland; Brian Wilson; the 2-year-old Tiger Woods (his TV debut); and of course, Bing, who appeared several times in 1975. Douglas was a former big-band crooner, born Michael Dowd Jr. in Chicago in 1925, and he supplied the singing voice of the Prince Charming character in the 1950 animated Disney classic *Cinderella.* Later, he had a hit recording with "The Men in My Little Girl's Life" in February 1966, reaching #6 on the U.S. charts. Bing really liked that song and he sang it on TV a couple of times in March 1966. In later years, Douglas lived in Palm Beach and he wrote a book about his TV programme. This what he said about his meeting with Bing.

> Talk about being comfortable with who you are. We did an entire show at Bing Crosby's magnificent home at Burlingame in Northern California. My first idol, Bing Crosby. If there was a singer, a performer, and a man I aspired to be like, it was Bing Crosby. . . .
>
> I was as nervous as a tenement kid at a debutante ball. It's no secret that Bing was almost as accomplished an investor as he was a performer. Estimates of his wealth started in the stratosphere and moved up from there. He sang, told stories, treated us like we were next-door neighbors over for a little visit. I'll tell you how unassuming Bing Crosby was. Bing was a sweater guy, remember? Between the golf and his casual, comfortable attitude, he had gone through a herd of alpacas in his time. He wore a sweater for the show. A few minutes before we started taping, I looked over and noticed this one had a gaping hole in the elbow. I leaned close and whispered, "Bing, that sweater has a hole in it." How laid-back was Bing? He looked at me and shrugged. "They'll get over it."
> (Mike Douglas, *I'll Be Right Back*, pages 62-63)

Mike Douglas, Bing and Kathryn laugh about the hole in Bing's cardigan

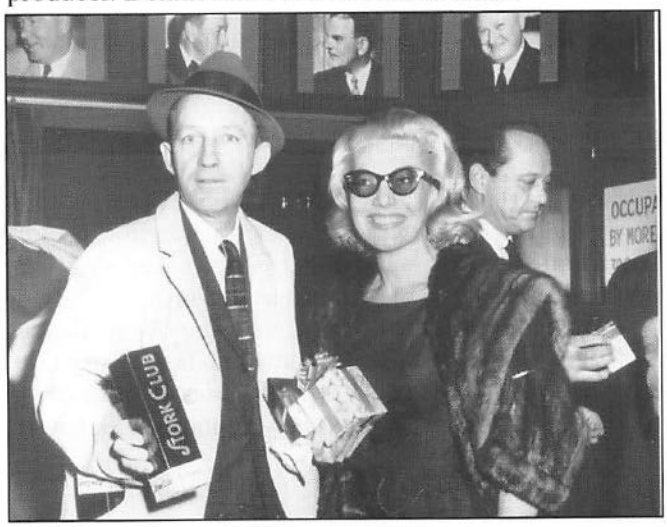
Byron Nelson - Hall of Fame golfer Byron Nelson, whose 18 victories in 1945 is considered the greatest season in golf history, died at his home in Texas on September 26. He was 94. Nelson's smooth style with early steel-shafted clubs became the basis of the modern golf swing

Bing congratulates Byron for winning his tournament in 1951

He won 11 straight tournaments in 1945, and 54 times from 1932-1946. Byron was the Masters Tournament champion in 1937 and 1942, and captured the U.S. Open in 1939 and the PGA Championship in 1940 and 1945. In addition to his record 18 titles in 1945, he finished second seven times that year, had 19 consecutive rounds under 70, and a 68.33 scoring average, including 67.45 in final rounds.

Nelson's last tour victory was the 1951 Bing Crosby Pro-Am. He and Bing became firm friends during the war years when they played together in many special events to sell war bonds and raise funds for forces' charities.

Pat Sheehan, who left us in January at the age of 74, was said, at one time, to be one of the most beautiful women in the world. She was one of the first Playmate centerfolds for *Playboy* (Miss October 1958). If you ever saw Clint Eastwood's *Space Cowboys* (2000), you saw her centerfold photo in the opening scene. She dated Howard Hughes, Frank Sinatra and Rod Taylor, among others, and in 1956 her name was even linked with Bing when he visited Las Vegas. Pat was the "NBC Queen" and the "Colgate Comedy Hour Girl" on TV and she had small uncredited parts in *Gigi* (1958), *Kismet* (1955), *Daddy Long Legs* (1955), *The Adventures of Hajji Baba* (1954) and *The French Line* (1954). In 1958, she married Bing's son, Dennis, and they had two children, Dennis Jr. and Patrick. She already had a son, Gregory, from her first marriage and he is now a screenwriter and producer. Dennis and Pat divorced in 1964.



Pat Sheehan with Bing.

GORD ATKINSON'S 'THE CROSBY YEARS'

Gord's regular look at some of the many celebrities he has interviewed over the years who had a connection with Bing.

PEGGY LEE - A FOND REMEMBRANCE

Peggy Lee, the sultry songstress, who personified cool elegance, was at heart a shy, small town girl. Her sensual voice and sophisticated manner masked her humble nature and feelings of insecurity.

She was born Norma Egstrom in Jamestown, North Dakota. Her mother died when she was four years old and she was raised by her handyman father. Despite a troubled childhood she overcame adversity and began singing locally when she was only 14. A short time later she won an audition on a Fargo radio station. The program director suggested that she adopt a more poetic and simpler name for her radio debut.

While appearing at a Chicago Hotel, young Miss Lee was discovered by the incomparable Benny Goodman. In 1943 he featured her on his recording of the old swinging blues lament, 'Why Don't You Do Right'. It topped the hit parade and launched her recording career.

It was in 1974 that I had the pleasure of being invited to her beautiful home in Bel Air, California for an unusual interview. The circumstances were out of the ordinary. It was at the time that I was producing my radio anthology *The Crosby Years*. Despite her convalescence from a medical procedure, she graciously agreed to meet with me. As a member of the cast of Bing's radio show, she was most anxious to talk to me about her long association with Bing.

Although she was bedridden, I was invited to tape our conversation while seated beside her. She was knitting as I entered her room and continued to do so during our interview. I was most appreciative of her thoughtfulness.

She recalled how she first learned to relax while in the company of the most relaxed performer in show business. "At that time," she recalled, "I was quite shy. Before each program I would be pacing up and down the halls of NBC. One day Bing noticed me pacing nervously and asked if there was anything he could do to make me feel more at ease. I told him there was something strange that he could do to help me. He said, 'I don't mind, what is it?' Well, I replied, when you introduce someone on the program you usually leave the stage to them. I would be happy if you would stay right by me so that I can see your feet. That way I'll know you're nearby and I won't be so nervous. I don't think there are many people who serenaded Bing's feet. But I did, and would do it again, today, tomorrow and forever."

It was with great affection that she remembered her years with Bing. I told her that his co-stars, that I had interviewed, all said the same thing, that he always created an atmosphere of relaxation.

"Oh yes," she replied, "everyone felt very much at home with him. He was always so very pleasant."

During the time that she was a featured member of his radio programs, she was married to guitarist, Dave Barbour, who was an alumnus of the great Benny Goodman's band.

"I'd like to tell you about the human side of Bing," Peggy said with emotion. "When Dave was very ill, I was working for Bing on his Philco Show. David had a stomach operation and they didn't expect him to live. Bing called the hospital every morning to ask how he had come through the night. He offered me anything I needed. It was such a comfort just to know that he cared that much. David, for some time, was in an oxygen tent and on one of the nights Bing's program was being

broadcast, he kept saying, 'I have to hear Bing Crosby.' We got permission to put a radio up next to the oxygen tent. He was very restless until he heard Bing sing, 'Where the Blue of the Night'. I think it was actually therapeutic.

David recovered and lived for many more years. I don't think Bing realized that he had done such a good thing. Philosophically speaking, and he was very philosophic, he really didn't know what great things his singing did, or what wonderful influences his personality had on people. There is a certain security just thinking about Bing Crosby."

Her years with Bing on radio were her formative musical years. She gave him great credit for her development. "One of the most important things he taught me was how to sing duets. He was always giving the advantage to the other person. He would adjust to their volume; he would watch your lips as you were singing. He would pay attention to what you were doing and so you were really singing together. He had an unselfishness about his work.

Peggy's only film appearance with Bing - in Mr. Music.

"He always knew his part; he always was on time, so punctual. You mentioned, Gordon, one particular record that we made together, 'The Moon Came Up With A Great Idea Last Night'. It was fun doing it. I remember thinking at the time, how can he always be so good right away. I was always early, and afraid to be late. I wanted very much to be needed and so I would be there alone in the studio playing the piano. Sometimes John Scott Trotter would come in first, and sometimes it would be Bing – he was always early. Depending on what I was playing, Bing would sometimes say 'what personality are you today, Peg?' I thought about that, I still think about it and wonder what he meant."

Over 600 recordings bear her name with a memorable array of hits, including, 'It's a Good Day', 'Manana', 'Lover', 'Fever', 'Pass Me By', 'Big Spender' and 'Is That All There Is?' Her vocal versatility helped her sustain her popularity for over five decades. "At first," she told me, "I was asked to sing only 'up tempo' songs, because most of my contemporaries were singing ballads. I wanted to sing them too. But 'up tempo' numbers are not for everyone. There is a certain in-born technique to it that cannot be learned. It's a jazz oriented feeling that's a gift. I am fortunate that I can sing that way and also perform ballads. I never get bored singing."

A successful composer, she collaborated with Sonny Burke on the score of the Disney film, *The Lady and the Tramp*, and was the voice of the animated canine star. Her film career was brief but notable. She surprised the critics with two sensitive performances: opposite Danny Thomas in the 1953 version of *The Jazz Singer* and in a supporting role in the Jack Webb film, *Pete Kelly's Blues*, which won her a 1955 Oscar nomination.

Respected by younger performers, she was comfortable with the changes in popular music. "It's a lot more conversational today and earthier. I remember Johnny Mercer telling me that when you can keep the earthy touch going, you've got it made."

As a diabetic, her health for several years was in jeopardy. She had a stroke and underwent heart surgery in 1998. At the time of her death, Jan. 21, 2002, she was 81. Her only child, daughter Nicki Lee Foster, said shortly after her passing: "She was a perfectionist. She had an incredible ear and saw her performance as a total complete musical picture from start to finish."

The eminent music critic of *The New Yorker* magazine, Whitney Balliett, summed up her artistry best when he wrote, "Many singers confuse shouting with emotion. Peggy Lee does not carry a tune; she elegantly follows it."

Gord Atkinson

[Editor: Gord's 'The Crosby Years' series of CDs remains available and please see Trading Post for details.]

Keeping Track

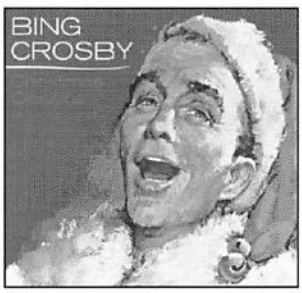
***Ken Crossland** looks at the new releases.*

COMPACT DISCS

Bing's immortal verse to "White Christmas" tells us that "The sun is shining, the grass is green ..." and whilst that was intended to be Los Angeles on Christmas Eve, the same climatic conditions apply as I type this on what is supposed to be a chilly English autumn day. The seasons are indeed on the move, but Christmas is forever happily fixed and with it, a renewed set of Crosby offerings. Let's get the tinsel-tinted ones out of the way first.

Bing Crosby's Christmas Classics **Capitol Records USA** **$13.00**

1. White Christmas (1957 TV version - without Frank Sinatra) 2. Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas 3. Winter Wonderland 4. What Child Is This? / The Holly and the Ivy 5. Little Drummer Boy 6. O Holy Night 7. Littlest Angel 8. Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow! 9. Hark! The Herald Angels Sing 10. Frosty the Snowman 11. Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer (1950) 12. I Wish You a Merry Christmas 13. Do You Hear What I Hear? 14. Pat-A-Pan / While Shepherds Watched Their Sheep 15. Christmas Dinner Country Style 16. Peace on Earth/The Little Drummer Boy (1977 with David Bowie)



This CD is Capitol's third re-issue of Bing's 1962 album for Warner Brothers, but the changes here from previous versions include the use of the original album cover – a big improvement on the last two CDs, and the inclusion of some additional tracks over and above those on the original LP. These include a lift of Bing's 1957 TV duet with Frank Sinatra, although judicious editing has removed the Hoboken kid, a move that would have pleased at least one former editor of our august journal! Greg van Beek also tells us that the version of "Rudolph" included here is Bing's 1950 Decca release, but with a "stunningly crisp remastering." Published price is around $13 but shop around on the internet and you can get it for half that.

Christmas With Frank & Bing **Castle Pulse PLSCD807 UK £2.99**

1. White Christmas (Bing) 2. Christmas Dreaming (A Little Early This Year) – Frank) 3. Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow! (Bing) 4. It Came Upon A Midnight Clear (Frank) 5. Silent Night (Bing) 6. Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas (Frank) 7. Away In A Manger (Bing) 8. Santa Claus Is Coming To Town (Frank) 9. O Little Town Of Bethlehem (Bing) 10. Jingle Bells (Frank) 11. Rudolph The Red Nosed Reindeer – (Bing) 12. Winter Wonderland (Frank) 13. God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen (Bing) 14. Medley (Frank) 15. The First Noel (Bing) 16. Here Comes Santa Claus (Bing) 17. Adeste Fideles (Frank) 18. I'll Be Home For Christmas (Bing) 19. The Christmas Song (duet)

Still on the theme of Bing and Frank, this CD looks like an album of duets, but in fact it's a one-for-me, one-for-you selection of Christmas solos, apart from the final track which is a duet. Drawn mainly from radio material, it's been around before, so be warned.

White Christmas – Bing Crosby & Rosemary Clooney Laserlight USA $6.00

1. Deck The Halls (Bing) 2. Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer (Rosie) 3. Good King Wenceslas (Bing) 4. Little Drummer Boy (Rosie) 5. Jingle Bells (Bing) 6. Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas (Rosie) 7. The First Noël (Bing) 8. Suzy Snowflake (Rosie) 9. God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen (Bing) 10. The Christmas Song (Rosie) 11. Adeste Fideles (Bing) 12. Silent Night (Rosie) 13. It Came Upon a Midnight Clear (Rosie) 14. Joy To The World (Bing) 15. White Christmas (Rosie)

More of the same here, with another duet-looking album that isn't. Rather, it's made up of alternate solos, drawn as far as I can see from commercial releases.

White Christmas **Platinum CD1339 UK £2.99**

1. The Old Man / Gee, I Wish I Was Back In The Army (with Danny Kaye) 2. Sisters (Peggy Lee & Trudy Stevens) 3. The Best Things Happen While You're Dancing (Danny Kaye) 4. Snow (with Danny Kaye, Peggy Lee & Trudy Stevens) 5 Blue Skies / I'd Rather See A Minstrel Show / Mandy (with Danny Kaye) 6. Choreography (Danny Kaye) 7. Count Your Blessings Instead Of Sheep 8. Love You Didn't Do Right By Me (Peggy Lee) 9. What Can You Do With The General? 10. White Christmas (with Danny Kaye, Peggy Lee & Trudy Stevens) 11. White Christmas 12. Easter Parade 13. Happy Holiday 14. Be Careful, It's My Heart 15. I'll Capture Your Heart 16. Moonlight Becomes You 17. Sunday, Monday Or Always 18. Swinging On A Star 19. Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate The Positive 20. Sunshine Cake (with Carol Richards) 21. In The Cool, Cool, Cool Of The Evening (with Jane Wyman) 22. Chicago Style (with Bob Hope) 23. Aren't You Glad You're You?

This CD is something approaching what the cover implies, but not quite! The first 10 tracks come from the Decca LP of songs from the film "White Christmas" but these of course featured Peggy Lee and Trudy Stevens, rather than Vera Ellen and Rosie, who appeared in the film. The rest of the tracks are mainly Bing solos, four from "Holiday Inn" which has a kind of logic and a further nine that as far as I can see, having nothing to do with Christmas at all!

Enough festive focus, perhaps, but look out for "The Bing Crosby Christmas Album", also from Platinum in the UK (22 standard Christmas tracks for £2.99) or in the US, a CD and DVD package, "White Christmas" that features a CD of Bing and a "Winter Dreams" DVD, which I don't think is Bing, but happy to be corrected if anyone out there knows better. Laserlight too have a 16-track release, also called "White Christmas" but this they tell us is a "Special Collector's Edition". Mmmm. Nice sleeve though.

In the non-Christmas releases, we sadly have nothing in the class of the Chronologicals or Good'n Rare, but there is nevertheless, a lot of fresh stuff around, and you will forgive us if space precludes a full track listing of some of the multi-CD sets that have arrived.

Cowboy & Western Songs **Country Stars** **USA $12.00**

1. Mule Train 2. Don't Fence Me In (With The Andrews Sisters) 3. Home On The Range 4. Take Me Back To My Boots & Saddle 5. Tumbling Tumbleweeds 6. I'm An Old Cowhand (From The Rio Grande) 7. Riders In The Sky 8. Clementine 9. When The Bloom Is On The Sage 10. Ride, Tenderfoot, Ride 11. Ridin' Down The Canyon 12. Gotta Get Me Somebody To Love 13. You Are My Sunshine 14. El Rancho Grande 15. Empty Saddles 16. San Antonio Rose 17. Sierra Sue 18. San Fernando Valley 19. Twilight On The Trail 20. Deep In The Heart Of Texas 21. Who Calls? 22. Riding Herd On A Cloud Tonight 23. The Last Round-Up

An attractive mixture here of commercial and radio material for anyone who likes Bing in western garb.

It Had To Be You **Quadromania 4011222224200** **Germany** **£8.00**

CD1 1. Is You Is, Or Is You Ain't (Ma Baby)? (with The Andrews Sisters) 2. Sunday, Monday Or Always 3. Don't Fence Me In (with The Andrews Sisters) 4. There's A Fella Waiting In Poughkeepsie (with The Andrews Sisters) 5. Somebody Loves Me 6. I'd Know You Anywhere 7. San Fernando Valley 8. Maybe 9. Swinging On A Star 10. Day Dreaming 11. My Buddy 12. Begin The Beguine 13. Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral 14. I'll Be Seeing You 15. Lullaby 16. Pistol Packin' Mama (with The Andrews Sisters)

CD2 17. You Made Me Love You (with The Merry Macs) 18. Now It Can Be Told 19. Stardust (1939) 20. Wrap You Troubles In Dreams (1939) 21. Ciribiribin (with The Andrews Sisters) 22. It Must Be True (1939) 23. Yodelin' Jive (with The Andrews Sisters) 24. Yes Indeed! (with Connee Boswell) 25. Birds Of A Feather 26. Birth Of The Blues 27. The Waiter And The Porter And The Upstairs Maid (with Mary Martin & Jack Teagarden) 28. I Ain't Got Nobody 29. Deep In The Heart Of Texas 30. I'll Capture Your Heart 31. Lazy 32. When My Dreamboat Comes Home 33. Ain't Got A Dime To My Name 34. Mine (with Judy Garland) 35. Put It There, Pal (with Bob Hope)

CD3 36. Chattanoogie Shoe-Shine Boy 37. Royal Garden Blues (non Bing) 38. Baby, Won't You Please Come Home? (non Bing) 39. Blueberry Hill (with Louis Armstrong) 40. Lazybones (with Louis Armstrong) 41. Rockin' Chair (non Bing) 42. You're Just In Love (with Louis Armstrong) 43. Lazy River 44. Panama (non Bing) 45. Way Down Yonder In New Orleans 46. A Song Is Born (non Bing) 47. La Vie En Rose (Louis Armstrong) 48. Baby, Won't You Please Come Home? (non Bing) 49. My Honey's Lovin' Arms (radio) 50. I Get Ideas (Louis Armstrong) 51. A Kiss To Build A Dream On (with Louis Armstrong) 52. On The Sunny Side Of The Street (Louis Armstrong) 53. Gone Fishin' (with Louis Armstrong)

CD4 54. Pale Moon 55. Got The Moon In My Pocket 56. Road To Morocco (with Bob Hope) 57. Old Buttermilk Sky 58. Gotta Get Me Somebody To Love 59. Huggin' And Chalkin' 60. And So To Bed 61. Love Somebody 62. Rambling Rose 63. The Donovans 64. Katrina 65. I Cross My Fingers 66. Mona Lisa (radio) 67. High On The List (radio) 68. Pretty Baby 69. The Loneliness Of Evening 70. Sailing Down The Chesapeake Bay 71. It Had To Be You 72. That's A-Plenty 73. Chicago Style (with Bob Hope) 74. La Mer 75. Mademoiselle De Paris 76. (Oh Baby Mine) I Get So Lonely 77. Young At Heart

All manner of things from commercial issues and radio broadcasts on this 4CD German set, which is available through Amazon in both the UK and the USA. Good quality and good value too, with 77 tracks for around £6/$9. It seems to have been issued last year but we've have only just caught up with it.

EMI Comedy – Bing Crosby & Bob Hope **EMI** **UK** **£6.99**
EMI Comedy – Bing Crosby **EMI** **UK** **£6.99**

Bing Crosby & Bob Hope
1. The Road To Hollywood / Road To Morocco 2. Bob's Travels / It's Love, Love, Love 3. Christmas After The War 4. Have I Told You Lately That I Love You? 5. Crosby In Hospital / If I Knew You Were Coming I'd Have Baked A Cake 6. Being Nice For The Sponsor / Third Man Song 7. Military Police / I Wish I Wuz

Bing Crosby
1. The Deadbeats 2. Father And Son Talk 3. The Bank Teller 4. Back Alley Fortune Tellers/ Carolina In The Morning (Medley) 5. Mad About Jingles 6. Your Flop Parade 7. Rare Crosby Blooper Out-Take

Bing has appeared previously in this series from EMI in the UK and these two releases, not to hand at the time of writing, promise a nice selection of radio sketches, with some vocal duets with Hope thrown in. Due for release in early November, they should be available by the time you read this.

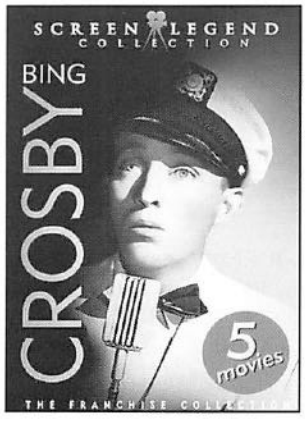
And to close, a quick scamper through some multi-CD sets .....
***The Golden Era Of Music 4, Mainstream Jazz, Germany, £8.00** is another German release, this time with 32 tracks, drawn mainly from commercial releases of the Thirties and Forties.*
***Triple Treasures, on the Pid label from the USA ($10.00)** has three CDs here with 68 titles, similar era to the release listed above.*
***Bing Crosby Essential Collection on Avid in the UK** **(£4.00)** is a double CD featuring one of the vogue words in CD titles just now. 53 tracks from the same two decades, but with some radio material thrown in.*

DVD

In contrast to the flood of CD releases, there are only a few items of real note on the DVD front. First, we have five Bing films never before on commercially issued DVDs!

Bing Crosby - Screen Legend Collection **Universal MCA030922D** **USA** **$19.98**
Waikiki Wedding/Double Or Nothing/East Side Of Heaven/If I Had My Way/Here Come The Waves

"Bing Crosby's extraordinary singing, striking good looks and captivating screen presence made him a Hollywood legend. Five of his most timeless musicals can be enjoyed time and time again in the Bing Crosby: Screen Legend Collection. Featuring co-stars Martha Raye, Betty Hutton, Joan Blondell and Gloria Jean, these classic films illustrate the seemingly effortless acting and mellow singing style of an eternal screen legend."



So says Universal's sales pitch for this 3-DVD digipak set, which is indeed a most welcome addition to the Crosby film library on DVD.

Holiday Inn **Universal** **USA** **$13.99**

This is the package put together by Ken Barnes and issued in the UK in 2002. We were delighted by it then and now it's been released in Region 1 format in the USA. Greg mentioned this in his editorial and this is what he has to say about it on the Amazon site.

"Just finished watching the newly released Special Edition of *Holiday Inn*. I was amazed at the clarity of the picture. I've never seen a print of this film looking so pristine. Even on just a regular, 20" non-HDTV set, the hairs askew on top of Bing's toupee during the famous White Christmas scene are plainly visible. Now if you can see single hairs on a person's head during a medium shot on a small television set, that's a stunningly clear picture! The audio as well is crisp and clear with rich bass and treble tones. If you watch the film with the audio commentary on, you'll hear the dulcet tones of Ken Barnes relating some fascinating tidbits about the making of the film, the songs (one particularly interesting part concerns the verse to White Christmas), the cast, etc. All is enhanced by sound

bites from Bing and Fred Astaire themselves in archive audio material from the 1970's. As an example, Bing speaks of the continuing sales of his recording of 'White Christmas' as late as 1974, how he felt it was due in part to people giving the record as a Christmas gift.

The real gems are the bonus features, particularly the 45 minute long mini feature 'A Couple of Song & Dance Men'. Ken Barnes is joined by Fred Astaire's lovely daughter, Ava, sharing biographical memories of both Bing and Fred, along with trivia tidbits. Ava shows and reads some of the letters Fred Astaire wrote to his wife while on a USO tour in England with Bing in 1944, and telegrams to Fred from Bing, Cole Porter, and Irving Berlin are also shown on screen. All is pieced together nicely with song excerpts from Bing's films, coming attractions trailers, and newsreel footage, including Bing opening the Stage Door Canteen in 1944. The other, shorter bonus feature runs 7 minutes and is titled 'All Singing - All Dancing'. Ken shares some rare behind the scenes photos and techniques of how musical numbers were filmed, beginning with the early talkies. He shows how the orchestra and singer were together on the set and recorded as one. The original theatrical trailer for *Holiday Inn* is also included.

All is wrapped up nicely with a slip-cover that goes over the DVD case. When compared with the two-on-one DVD of *Holiday Inn* and *Going My Way* that's been out for many years now, the difference in quality is plainly visible. The *Holiday Inn* print looks somewhat fuzzy or "muddy" in quality when watched after seeing the brilliance of the newly restored print used on this Special Edition.

In short, this is a DVD that's well worth having. If you want the definitive presentation of this classic holiday film, this is it! Bravo Ken & co." **Greg Van Beek**

The Gay Divorcee **Turner Home Entertainment** **(Region 1)** **USA** **$19.98**
The DVD of this Fred Astaire/Ginger Rogers vehicle contains a most welcome extra - the 1935 colour short *Star Night at the Cocoanut Grove*. This features Bing singing "With Every Breath I Take." Great to have this in such good quality.

The Wonderful World of Louis Armstrong **Time Life** **USA** **$31.99**
This November 2006 release has two CDs of Louis, material recorded between 1931 and 1967 plus a DVD. It's the DVD that's of interest to us, as the blurb tells us that it features a duet with Bing. Elsewhere we are also told that the DVD features Louis in interview with David Frost and putting two and two together, begs the question of whether the duet might be the 'Blueberry Hill' collaboration from "Frost Over America" in 1971 – their last work together shortly before Louis's death. Watch this space

A couple of other DVD related things in passing. Ken Barnes alerted UK readers to the fact that the Music Zone chain of shops was offering a real bargain in the form of the Complete Road To Box Set (Morocco, Zanzibar, Singapore and Utopia) along with Rio, Bali and Hong Kong all for £11.97 - £1.80 per film. Rio and Bali are said to be terrific prints, whist Ken's original 4 film set was also high quality. Normal retail price is around £40.

In similar vein, Greg Van Beek alerts US readers to look out for a special DVD of "White Christmas" in Starbucks Coffee House, along with a limited edition CD of songs from the film.

WHAT'S ON THE WEB?

eBay continues to generate its share of Crosby memorabilia, chief of which this time around has been the sailor suit that Bing wore in "We're Not Dressing". A cool $300 would have left you the proud owner. Also on eBay, an interesting CD was on offer featuring the Westwood Marching and Chowder Club Band. Here's an explanation of what it was:

"The items on this disc were performed by members of the Westwood Marching and Chowder Club. Among the guest performers were Bing Crosby, Dixie Lee Crosby, Andy Devine and host, Clark Gable. The program was taken from eight two-sided 78 rpm Presto home recordings made at a party in Clark Gable's home. According to biographer Gary Giddins, the club was set up by Bing about 1938 to draw together his and Dixie Lee's neighbors at Toluca Lake. The Marching and Chowder Club affirmed Bing's likeableness with insiders and amused the public when it was learned of the get-togethers. Finally gatecrashing celebrity hunters caused the hiring of special security guards to keep out people who were not invited. The selections on the CD are: 1. Dinah (parody), 2. I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now, 3. Sweet Leilani (with Dixie Lee), 4. Three Letters, 5. I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now, 6. My Romance (with Walter F. Lang), 7. Wake Up and Live (with Jack Benny), 8. Blood on the Saddle (with Andy Devine), 9. Ragtime Cowboy Joe (with Clark Gable) 10. I'm Gonna Sit Right Down (with Jack Benny and Andy Devine)."

Some of these tracks have been around in private collections for a while, notably the duet with Gable and the Sweet Leilani track with Dixie, so it's interesting to have chapter and verse on their source.

Regular internet users may be familiar with "Wikipedia", which since its launch in 2001 has become the largest reference site on the web. It's unlike a conventional encyclopaedia in that anyone can contribute, edit, discuss etc the entries and as a result, it is a rich and fascinating source of information. Happily, the entry on Bing is detailed and thorough, reflecting no doubt lots of ICC contributions. Here's the overview it has of Bing:

"Harry Lillis "Bing" Crosby (May 3, 1903 – October 14, 1977) was an American singer and actor whose career lasted from 1926 until his death in 1977. He was one of the most successful performing artists of the 20th century.

Arguably the first true multi-media star, Bing Crosby's influence on popular culture and popular music is enormous—from 1934 to 1954 he held a nearly unrivalled command of record sales, radio ratings and motion picture grosses. He was usually considered to be a member of popular music's "holy trinity" of ultra-icons, alongside Elvis Presley and The Beatles.

Bing Crosby popularized singing with conversational ease, or crooning. His musical interpretations amalgamated rhythm and romance with scat singing, whistling, rhythmic improvisation and melodic paraphrasing as elements of a hotter, sexier sound than had been conceived before.

Crosby is also credited as being the major inspiration for most of the male singers that followed him, including the likes of Frank Sinatra, Perry Como and Dean Martin. Tony Bennett summed up Crosby's impact, stating, "Bing created a culture. He contributed more to popular music than any other person - he moulded popular music. Every singer in the business has taken something from Crosby. Every male singer has a Bing Crosby idiosyncrasy."

Worth a browse at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bing_Crosby

That's all for now folks. Happy listening and joyeux noel!

Ken Crossland
ken@kencrossland.co.uk http://www.kencrossland.co.uk

WHITE CHRISTMAS 1954

Designed & Printed by City Printers (Chester-le-Street) Ltd., Ropery Lane, Co. Durham, DH3 3NJ, United Kingdom.
Tel:+44 (0)191 3883255 Email gary@cityprint.demon.co.uk